









POST LIMINIUM

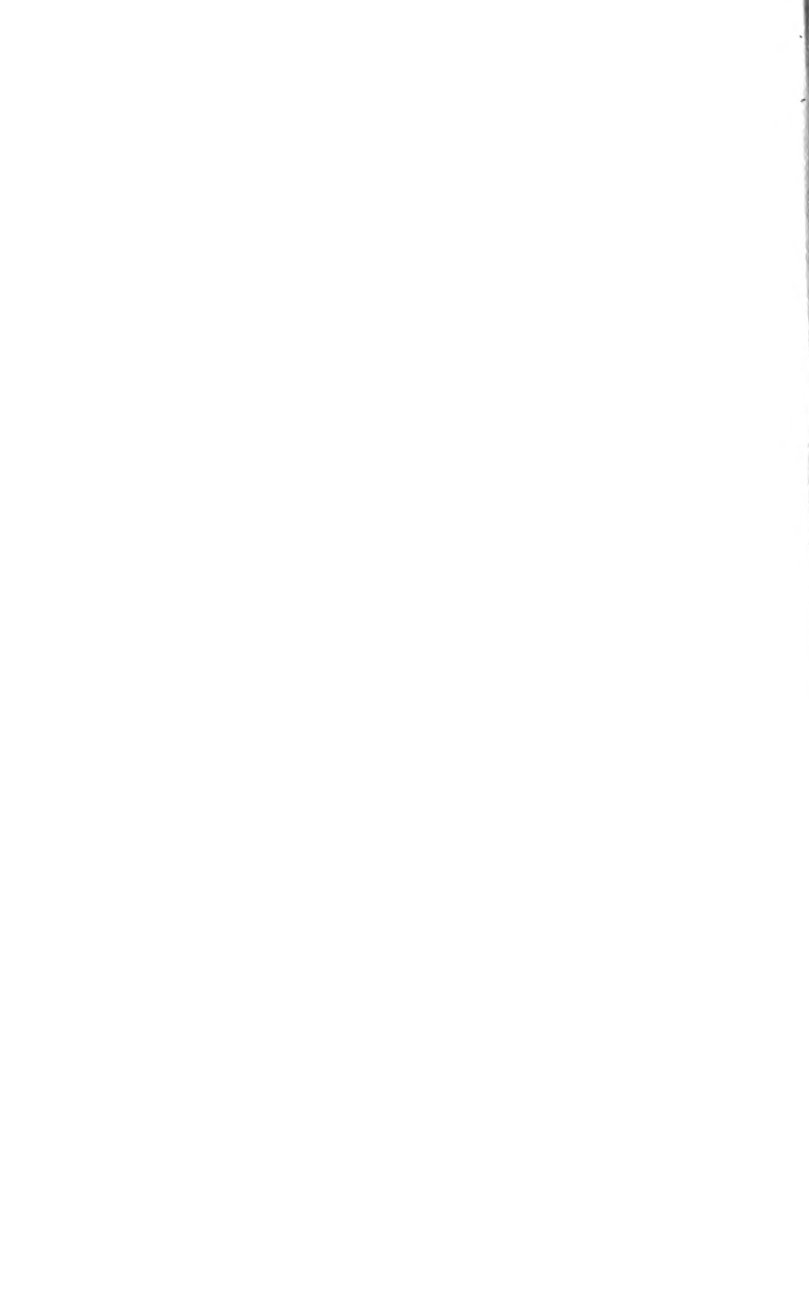
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POST LIMINIUM: ESSAYS  
AND CRITICAL PAPERS  
BY LIONEL JOHNSON

EDITED BY THOMAS WHITTEMORE



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## PREFACE

LIONEL JOHNSON was born on the 15th of March, 1867, at Broadstairs in Kent. Chiefly English and Welsh, with an Anglo-Irish strain especially valued and emphasized by him in the latter part of his short life, he cannot correctly be called an "Irishman," even though he so called himself frequently after 1890. He was educated at Winchester College and at New College, Oxford, graduating with honours. Both places, Winchester especially, took a lasting hold on his memory and affections. On St. Alban's Day, 1891, he was received by the Rev. William Lockhart, at St. Etheldreda's, London, into the Catholic Church. He read many languages, but did not travel abroad. From first to last, circumstances enabled him to lead his own recluse and happy life; his only material drawback was a constitution always frail, but he loved the open, and was a great walker. His critical powers were in their full play during the ten years (1891-1901) in which he lived and worked in London. Yet he published three books only: *The Art of Thomas Hardy*, a broadly-planned and

masterly prose commentary of 1896; and his beautiful verses in two slender volumes: *Poems*, 1895, and *Ireland*, 1897. He never married. During the last year of his life he was a house-bound invalid in his Clifford's Inn chambers, but had apparently quite recovered his usual health, when, on September 29, 1902, he met with a pitiful accident which caused his death on October 4. He was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Green.

Lionel Johnson belonged to an English literary group of meteoric brilliancy, over many of whom hung a singularly tragic fate. In the matter of art, his, the most reticent and the most sensitive expression among them, was also, beyond all doubt, the soundest and the most robust. Mr. Yeats, his fellow-worker, alludes to "the loneliness and gravity of his mind, its air of high lineage." This is an accurate observation. The young critic's every utterance is remarkable for its individual native balance; its fearlessness; its patience and courtesy under stress; its unfailing mental hospitality; its sweet old-fashioned scholarship, full of "ease and pleasantness, and quiet mirth;" for what he himself calls in another "an almost Latin clearness and weight:" the charming, arresting word of one who lives chiefly in the spirit, above the fogs of human prejudice, with "the best that has been thought and said in the world." He was a very great loss to a hurried generation which did not fail altogether to appreciate him.

The papers chosen to form this book comprise



about one-fourth of the unpublished material gathered together. The quality in all is much the same. What is here included to represent an excellent output shows primarily the characteristic facets of the writer's austere but opulent mind. Things "occasional" indeed, but written with unprofessional enjoyment; protests, not heavily worded, which go far and deep; telling summaries, in a packed space, of great works and great lives; disquisitions of a wise and humorous mind on fresh subjects, or on subjects never stale,—these form the bulk of the contents. It is hard to be sure that one has chosen satisfactorily on behalf of a writer whose own choice was so fastidious. Lionel Johnson, had he been rich in years as in gifts, might have left all these little essays and reviews unpublished. To print them, to weld them, is to take their author a little off his guard. Yet we may be thankful to have saved them.

The disconnected papers on his old tutor and greatly loved friend, Walter Pater, have been gathered under one heading. They seem to point towards a task never even begun, something similar to the admirable study of Mr. Hardy, only necessarily informed with yet more knowledge, insight and affection. If the brilliant early *Hobby-Horse* critique upon Mr. Robert Bridges be missed from this volume, the reasons are to be found in Mr. Johnson's own letters in *The Athenæum*, dated June 1, and July 18, 1896. Again, as there is already in print a careful and solidly conceived review by Mr. Johnson of the poetry

of James Clarence Mangan,\* it was thought well to include here only the slighter but more animated account of that little-known genius, which figured in a London daily.

Once more, an account of the Gordon Riots (published by the Catholic Truth Society), and two narratives which were printed by *The Pageant*, 1896 and 1897, though expressive in a spirited way of their author's feeling about literary decadence and about the trials of the Church in France, were regretfully excluded from a volume such as this, where narrative has no place, because the colouring of each part must be more or less blended in, if it is hoped to make upon the reader any homogeneous impression.

The contributions to *The Spectator* were all unsigned. So were those which appeared in *The Academy*, save the four entitled Thackeray, Byron, Hardy and Friends that Fail Not; the same may be said of all the papers from that interesting and long-extinct journal, *The Anti-Jacobin*, excepting the Marie Bashkirtseff, signed in full "Lionel Johnson," and one brief chapter called Voluntary Paupers (on the same general subject as Friends that Fail Not, and here incorporated with it under due indications), which bears a signature reversed, "J.L." Anonymous also were the criticisms in *The Daily Chronicle*, with the single reservation of Thoughts on Bacon, signed "L.J." The *Outlook* and *Speaker* articles were all

\* "A Treasury of Irish Poetry," edited by Stopford A. Brooke and T. W. Rolleston, London. Smith, Elder & Co., 1900. Pp. 241-250.

signed in full. The Fools of Shakspere, a boy's attempt, naturally over-florid, was signed "L. P. Johnson." The "P." indicates Pigot, a middle name figuring as his in College registers, but never used, either in private or in public, in later life. Lastly, it should perhaps be stated that the above list, as well as a very few verbal alterations, base their genuineness upon the Editor's access to Mr. Johnson's published papers, as filed by his own hand, and kindly lent by his sister, Miss Isabella Johnson.

The Latin title, an old legal one, alludes to the right of a man, after a lapse of time, to enter again into his own, over his former threshold. It is hoped that in this unpretentious book there may be newly heard the idiosyncratic footfall, always light, of one untimely gone away,

"Where cloudless Quires sing without teares."

Lionel Johnson had a genius for friendship. May he still, under cover of these not least deliberate of his moods, make and keep new friends.



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# POST LIMINIUM

## NOTES ON WALTER PATER

### I.—MR. PATER UPON PLATO \*

[*The Westminster Gazette*, Mar. 2, 1893; *The Speaker*, Oct. 28, 1893.]

"OH, to be reading Greats at B.N.C.!" is the wish springing from the heart of a Platonic reader fresh from the study of these most winning lectures; lectures full of a golden wisdom, full of a golden humour. In some sort they are perfect expressions of the academic spirit: that leisurely travel of the mind among great things, under a wise and persuasive guidance, which Plato, founder of the Academy, loved and valued. There is so little of the confident dogmatist, with iron bonds for the constraint of thought, in this lecturer; he does but put before young students, the comrades of his "Emerald Uthwart," his vision of Plato, a living vision, quick with the colours and the play of life. Unlike so many Platonists, Mr. Pater is not careful to find a fully-formed scheme of thought, German for completeness, in the lively, elusive, variegated thoughts of Plato. But the spirit of the man: that is the thing for him! Not that he would "unsphere" the spirit of Plato, reanimating the dead master, in any dubious restoration of his unconjecturable very self; that, again, he abandons to a German genius of ingenuity. Rather, Mr. Pater relies upon the

\* "Plato and Platonism:" A Series of Lectures. By Walter Pater. (Macmillan.) 1893.

old, immortal, and familiar writings: those dialogues in which is the body, no less than the soul, of Plato. . . .

"Truly even Plato whosoever well considereth, shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin as it were and beauty depended most of poetry. For all standeth upon dialogues; wherein he feigneth many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them; besides his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, with interlacing mere tales, as Gyges' ring and others, which who knoweth not to be flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden." Thus Sir Philip Sidney; and thus Milton, at the close of a curiously beautiful poem:—

"Iam iam poetas urbis exules tuæ  
Revocabis, ipse fabulator maximus,  
Aut institutor ipse migrabis foras."

Plato has ever been accounted a spirit of flame and music, a divine poet. Consider but his followers, in their diverse fashions of honouring him. There are the Alexandrian Platonists, the patristic Platonists, the Florentine and Renaissance Platonists, our English, Elizabethan and Cambridge Platonists. It matters little whom you choose, Plotinus or Augustine, Pico or Bruno or Michael Angelo, Spenser or Sidney, or Milton or More; later yet, Wordsworth or Shelley: in each of these you discern an ardour of the intellect kindled at the fire of Plato, rather than an anxious and deliberate metaphysic. It is otherwise with Aristotle: the schools of Pisa and Padua, the disciples of Averroës and Aquinas, exalted him to a height from which Bacon was fain to pull him down; but we miss the rapture of a personal love. No Italian academy kept the feast of Aristotle, as the Medicean academy kept November the thirteenth in honour of Plato, their classic Moses, almost their Attic Christ. Coleridge never called Aristotle "a



plank from the wreck of Paradise, cast on the shores of idolatrous Greece." Surveying the many makers or poets of ideal states and perfect cities, it is not the Aristotelian politics, but the Platonic Republic, that we find inspiring their dreams. And perhaps the divine sagacity of the Catholic Church has in nothing been better shown than in her suspicion of Plato, the patron of such fascinating heresies, and her trust in Aristotle, the severe and dry. . . .

Once more Mr. Pater has shown us how fruitful of good things is this visible world, with its garniture and furniture for every sense : how a Plato, no disembodied ghost of the air, but a breathing man, took "sweet counsel" with the world of sight, and used the eyes, together with the mind, of an artist. It is as though he bade his hearers, in their wonderful Oxford, look upon their studies of philosophy as of a piece really with their other studies by field or river ; as full of moving dramatic interest, thriving upon all kinds of intimations received from the life around them. Yet Plato is not of Cyrene : the spiritual master, the herald, some have said, of Saint Augustine, that is a real Plato too. Just where and how does Plato's high philosophy join hands with his delight in visible life ? What harmony was that he would effect among the multitudinous sounds, the many colours, of this world ? Can life become a fair service of God, by any disciplined care for the best things in life, the worthiest and the finest of them all ? "Too late have I loved thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new ! Too late have I loved thee." That was the cry of Augustine. And, "Too late have I known thee, O true Light ! Too late have I known thee." There is no such outbreak from the soul of Plato ; but, from the first a lover, he also passed into a knower of an unoriginate beauty and of a very light. His intuition was much that of Augustine, again : "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart hath no rest until it rest in Thee." Mr. Pater, in his first lectures, traces the growth of Plato's mind upon these matters. The "ruinous

fluidity" of the Ionian, Attic temper, its "centrifugal" motion, its multiform activity,—these, endangering all stable beauty and established truth, a form of corruption in body and soul, in State and family, were the prevalent evil and the potent plague. How to set the feet upon the rock, as said his "cousin at Zion," was Plato's problem. With Heraclitus then, that "flowing philosopher," in Berkeley's phrase, no terms! Under the shifting, drifting tides of change, ever "becoming," never "being," there must be a law of unity and rest. Let us turn to "our father Parmenides." Yes! yes! explains the Eleatic father, but all this infinite motion is nothing, *is* not; that which *is*, the Eternal One, let us cling to that, and shut our eyes, true mystics, to the vanishing world of sense. True thought, true being: opinion, phenomena: there is the eternal antithesis. Cheerless doctrine: and Plato, so Mr. Pater exquisitely describes him, colours it and breathes life into it, making those realities of the soul, those absolute ideas, well-nigh divine persons, before merging them into a divine unity. Presently comes Pythagoras, most romantic of philosophers, bringing "life and immortality to light." Music is lord and king: music, proportion, harmony, the virtue of number, the law of numerical relation, so inexplicable yet insuperable. It lies behind experience: why, then, the remembering soul in us has lain there too, will lie ahead of it also. The soul is immortal, and passes from life to life. With this sudden ray of light begins a mystical cosmogony, a spiritual geography; the music of the spheres, the celestial places, the lands of Plato's myths and visions flash upon him. In the doctrine, example, influence of Socrates, Plato touched solid ground again, and yet found a starting-point for many a "hazardous flight." To get at the facts, intellectual and moral, to cease from logomachy, to begin "dialectic," to leave off from assumption and presumption, to "follow the argument" whithersoever it goeth, even to the hemlock in the prison,—that is the counsel of Socrates. Ask yourself

about yourself, scrutinise every notion, be rigorous and impartial, honest and earnest ; press home each thought, test well each word. Do you come against a blank wall ? Does the word ring hollow and false ? Back again, and begin again. Look at life, this busy, workaday, practical world ; appeal to experience. Simple and sincere in this, though with plenty of rough humour, Socrates was, taught Plato to be, a philosopher, and not a sophist. "I want to make you anxious about your souls," was the appeal of Cardinal Newman to his hearers. "I want to make you interested in your souls," was the appeal of Socrates. "I will fit you for success in life, I will give you a 'practical' education," was the appeal of the sophist. It was the sophist's irritable, shifty, tricky training, says Mr. Pater, that Socrates loathed. Let us examine every question, be subtle and versatile in argument ; but, for the truth's sake, not for gain. Don't learn to doubt away all things ; but only lies, plausible and pestilent. 'And Plato himself, all this while, what is he, what is his unique and proper genius ? In a powerful and a beautiful essay, Mr. Pater discusses the elements of his genius : a love of the visible world, its arts and ways and looks, the instinct of "an excellent writer of fiction," no less than of the plastic artist. A love of love, sensuous certainly, by virtue, or vice, of a passionate temperament ; but tempered by an austere love of temperance, restraint, and order. The dreamland of metaphysics, so misty and foggy at times, is a passionate place for Plato ; the relation of things, truth to truth, thought to thought, image to image, all the invisible world, often so bare and grey, is for him a home almost of veritable persons : those "ideas" almost flash and quiver into personal life, at the touch of his passion. His style, his language, is alive with imagery caught from the visible world ; and his lovers, not always wise, have been something too apt to take him, literally, "at his word." In ethics, his ultimate aim, as in politics also, was a "faire music and divine concent," body

obeying soul : press that obedience home, upon all sides, and let the soul rule the body politic, and no art be with us but what is soul-inspiring, a "trumpet-call" to the forces of truth and righteousness. Dorian self-restraint, the "laconic" or Spartan habit :—that is to be our rule of life, half "monastic," half "military," wholly "musical." Our "City of the Perfect" is to keep perfect time in its marches and in its melodies ; and if you long for beauty you must find it in that rhythmically ordered life, where each does his part and all are fellows one with another, every man in his place. There is a music of the spheres, and one star differeth from another star in glory. It is, if you consider it, a scholar's vision : away with the vulgarity of excess ! And a saint's vision : away with the iniquity of lawlessness ! Take law, order, out of the universe : what horror of what a chaos follows but the thought of that ! Order, music, shall reign : a fair kingdom, for music is fair. For that let us fight, aspiring by the way of "ideals," combating with the weapons of reason, the true "dialectic." . . .

Said Bentley to Pope, upon his Homer : "A very pretty poem, but you must not call it Homer." Certain students, of the more arid and literal kind, might say of Mr. Pater's book : "A very pretty philosophy, but you must not call it Plato. This or that point is neglected, this or that other is magnified ; a metaphor here is something too curious, an analogy there fetched from over far. This is not Plato, though its beauty be Platonic." It is because such things may be said and in part justified that we have reminded readers of Plato and of Mr. Pater, of that traditional Platonism which is not a system of philosophy, but an inspiration of life. Consider, too, the audience which listened to these lectures : a set of "young students of philosophy" at Oxford. How excellent a thing for them, tempted perhaps to look upon philosophy as hair-splitting, a verbal juggle, that they should have their Plato at least presented with the secret of his personality suggested to them, vitalised for

them, by a writer who to an admirable erudition joins just that intuitive sympathy which recreates, reanimates, the great things of a world gone by ! Of the Platonic "ideas," those difficult and seductive "ideas," Mr. Pater gives them, as it were, a picture. His picture may not be wholly right, but whose can be ? And Mr. Pater's will at least stimulate, interest, attract. He could, doubtless, so place in winning lights the "forms" of Bacon, the "vortices" of Descartes, and show young philosophers how dear, how moving, those conceptions were to their first conceivers : they would actually see Bacon, see Descartes, brooding, cogitating, interpreting the "nature of things." The Lacedæmonians, again : how salutary a corrective to Thucydides, read without emotion, Mr. Pater's presentation of the austere, serene, Dorian hill-folk ! Just so, he could make young students of Rome, hasty partisans of Senate or of Cæsar, realise the better, finer spirit in either camp. It was assuredly not in the thought that Mills to be and future Mansels were among his hearers, that Mr. Pater composed and gave his lectures, but in the wish that the young scholars, face to face with some of the highest things in history, philosophies, religions, arts, should find a living soul in their old books, not antiquarian dust ; should carry away with them, a possession for all their lives, some sense of that ancient world once breathing, active, resolute, even as themselves to-day. It is in the very spirit of that cry, "Things, not words," the cry of Erasmus, Milton, Rousseau, and a thousand more, that Mr. Pater writes ; he is in perfect touch with all that is best in our modern demands for educational reform. How shall we appreciate the Evangelical Revival, the Catholic Revival, knowing nothing of Wesley and of Newman ? But Plato,—what do we know of Plato, what can those subtile dialogues really tell us of the man, of what manner he was ? Which is the truer Socrates, he of Xenophon, or he of Plato ? Well, scholars are in positions of trust : we confide in their honour. Unless scepticism entire is to be our word, we

must trust the good faith of our trained guides : a Wolf, a Mommsen, may fail to convince us, but they can never be quite conquered, never be proved fools or knaves. The very errors of keen and accomplished minds are valuable. Mr. Pater, in all his writings, has displayed certain characteristics, interests, "propensions," which his readers can be at no loss to comprehend ; they know in what ways, under what lights, it is of his proper genius to view and to expound great matters, personalities, periods. The concrete appeals to him, the soul in things as they find outward form and presence ; not the vague and vast, the colourless, intangible, invisible, inaudible, but aspirations expressed in and through written words, ideas of beauty carried out by actual substances, the natures of men legible upon their persons and circumstances. "Plato," he seems to tell his audience, "whom you know in the vague, a magnificent name, appears to me, meditating his work and his influence, to have been a man of this nature, of this sort : see ! you can trace, surely, a love of this, a dislike of that, in these passages ; here he has somewhat of an ascetic air, there of a passionate spirit ; Parmenides now, and presently Pythagoras, work on his mind ; Laconian ideals approve themselves to him ; his style and language have such a peculiarity, such a genius, and such again : considering it all, these and many things beside, the man appears to me of this nature, of this sort." Doubtless, the whole conception of Plato in these lectures, the influence upon him of this and that predecessor, his attitude towards such-and-such tendencies of contemporary thought and practice, may be just somewhat visionary, a work of art, of the "imaginative reason," delighting in its own adventures and conjectures ; but (and here, if needed, is Mr. Pater's ample justification), there is extant no study of Plato, no German treatise or monograph, which imposes itself as the final word upon the great theme. Grote is admirable, the Master of Balliol is admirable, many and many a writer, scholiast, textual critic, laborious editor, has

been admirable ; yet, as Casaubon said in the Hall of the Sorbonne, "What have they settled?" Certainly, some things have been conclusively settled ; but not Plato. The splendid hallucinations of Marsilius Ficinus, translating and pondering Plato, are of more value than many an arduous *excursus* bristling with the newest intricacies of philology. But all this seems to say that from Mr. Pater we may expect beautiful writing, personal views most alluring and interesting, all refinements of a lively, poetical imagination, but not strict scholarship, not the disciplined severity of the schools. An insult, and a silly insult, that would be ! Readers, accustomed by long experience to use *Marius* for a text-book exact, precise, rigorous, well-warranted and attested, of the Antonine age, do not need to be told that Mr. Pater never writes without his facts and evidences. Never can we say, consulting Apuleius, whom you will, that here certainly Mr. Pater has exceeded his authority, or missed this piece of characterisation, or criticism, or warrant ; rather, remembering his memorable pages, we remember also the old classical pages where his witnesses and warrants may be found. And so, encountering now and again some statement or opinion in Mr. Pater's lectures which is startling and novel, at first we may ask, What is his ground here ? But, examining the old words of the old writings, we ask, startled at their novelty thus interpreted : Surely, upon the face of it, and deeper than the surface, this is, indeed, what was meant at the first ? The words not merely will, but must, bear just this interpretation, compel just this inference. No pedant has been at work, and no amateur. That in which Mr. Pater is distinguished from most of his fellow-Platonists is his sense of the values of words. Finding in Plato an artist in language such as philosophy has not seen again (though we admit Berkeley to a lower place in his company), Mr. Pater has been at the pains to note the minute proprieties of Plato's style, and, so doing, to bring us back from careless

generalisations to a more loyal reverence for the text of the greatest prose writer. Unable himself to write at random, Mr. Pater is constantly checking our impatience or neglect of the written word, the word chosen with so deliberate an artistic reason. . . .

Assuredly Mr. Pater has the adorning touch, but it is always humour, in its high sense, which prompts him; anything pathetic, or grave, or ardent, things human and moving to men, speak to him. Throughout his writing runs a kind curiosity about men and their world, now deep and solemn, now lighter and less profoundly felt: something of Sir Thomas Browne's humanity. Few books so move us to kindly thoughts of life, so wake in us the old charities and common pieties of our race, as the books of this writer, whose name is sometimes taken in vain by lovers of an absolutely heartless art. . . . We must not stop to dwell upon the beauty of this one; its many pieces of perfect narrative, its dexterous passages of translation, its chastened and retiring scholarship. The lecture on Lacedæmon, for example, is already, without delay, a *locus classicus*. All the old excellencies are here: the structural unity, the minute propriety of phrase, the rich and quiet humour playing over it all. "How many great men," writes Emerson of Plato, "is Nature incessantly sending up out of night, to be *his men*,—Platonists!" It is abundantly true; as it is, that not one of them has done to Plato a greater service, with as great a modesty, as Mr. Pater has done, by these lectures "to some young students of philosophy." . . .

Archbishop Trench dwelt upon the mournful lesson of degeneracy in the meaning of words: if we call Mr. Pater a humanist, a humanitarian, it is in the most gracious meaning of the terms. Those who listened to this patient, winning exposition of Plato may never again read him in all their lives, but he will always be to them far more than an "academic" name, thanks to the guide with whom they walked "in Plato's shade."



## II.—MR. PATER'S HUMOUR

[ *The Academy*, Jan. 16, 1897.]

A LITTLE ingathering from *The Guardian* of nine reviews of Mr. Pater, though privately made and published, appeals to an audience not greatly fewer in number than the honest lovers of that still obscure great man. They are not his honest, or at the least his fortunate, lovers who praise but his grave beauty, passionate scholarship, elect restraint, and who read his measured sentences with only a devout or careful "recollection." Such solemnity, brought by some to an owlish perfection, is most needless and inappropriate: it is not the right way to read an humorist. Mr. Pater ceaselessly, as it were, pontificating; stiff and stately in his jewelled vestments; moving with serious and slow exactitude through the ritual of his style:—that is a Mr. Pater of the uneasy reader, to whom his rich humanity seems but a laborious humanism. That reader cannot catch the wise laughter rippling so pleasantly beneath the studied phrases; he is blind to the quiet smile, sometimes innocently *malin*, which lies as a charm upon the ordered utterance. Humour that is gentle in its strength, humour rooted in philosophy, humour gravely glad and gleaming, has not the popular chances of humour militant and pranksome, a thing that jerks surprisingly on wires. A great saint is, of necessity, a great humorist, since, like his Maker, he "knows whereof we are made": so too are the princes of poetry and philosophy, and thus we are sad at thinking that Milton and Mill were both without one part of their birthright. "Has God a sense of humour? Can He laugh?" asked a correspondent of Kingsley. "Yes!" came the answer: "because God has all perfections in perfection." Celestial humour, joyous and radiant and undoubting, is an obvious attribute of Omnipotent Omniscience, both in Itself, and as It contemplates free will in

man ; so, if we go to authority, have Shakspeare and Heine told us. And in proportion to a man's reach and range of vision is his share in the divine humour, his appreciation of "Things in Themselves," to quote Kant, of "Things as They Are," to quote Mr. Kipling. A heroic sense of sorrow, the very profundity of melancholy, are not incongruous with the very clarity of humour : only the narrow and the sour look askance at the sound of the wise laughter. And there are some to whom from early boyhood Mr. Pater, then the author of one book, gave an exhilaration which it were priggish to call intellectual merely, but which rippled into laughter the growing intellect.

Let us have done with the fabled Mr. Pater of a strict and strait solemnity, that travesty false and foolish ! Flesh and blood, life multiform and variegated, things charged and eloquent with humane emotion, a world starred with points of interest and concern,—among that moved the loving and patient genius of the man. Moved, obeying laws of art : so absolute and imperative was the obedience, that it seemed to many the one great thing of note. Each single word deliberately chosen ! never one harmless laxity ! always a passion of precision ! And it was inferred thence that Mr. Pater was a votarist of style for its own exacting sake, and not by reason of the reverent value that he set upon his matter, upon the humanities that were his reverent theme. Yet he was instinct with veritable fun, and wrote with quiet mirth as he elaborated his sense of life's meanings and contents. Never a sentimentalist, he is never found pluming himself upon his pathos or his humour : the notes are never forced. But his descriptions of things gone, old philosophy or old furniture, are steeped in a peaceful irony : his tales of young ambitions now in ashes, of ardent ideals laid in dust, have touches of Horace and of à Kempis, of Pascal and of Montaigne. Loving-kindness, which cares for the vast world's dead, for the live world's "little ones," for what moves or has moved the

affections of men,—he possessed that loving-kindness in its plenitude. Maudlin tears were far from his eyes, facile laughter from his lips: his “humours” were philosophic and natural, like those of Mr. Patmore and Mr. Meredith. But they are direct creators: he an indirect. So, many have read him with the loins girt, the brows knit, because he is a scholar, a critic, a humanist, an academic: when they fall upon a positive and patent jest, it disturbs them: this is levity, Mr. Pater forgets himself! They have been deaf and blind to the winning insinuations of a delicious pleasantry upon every page: they would be horrified with much amazement, to learn that some readers, in some moods, waver long between the election of Lamb or of Mr. Pater for a winter night’s companion. But truth involves delight: it is so universally. And both Lamb and Mr. Pater were solicitous for the expression of truth, not in its nakedness, but in its felicity: so that many of their perfect sentences communicate a thrill of consentient joy. To masters of the whimsical or the fantastic, our startled admiration may cry *Wonderful!* To masters of the truth in its beauty, we give a simple *Yes!* of personal thanks, with a glow at the heart and eyes. “Sudden Glory,” says Hobbes, “is the passion which maketh those Grimaces called Laughter.” Hobbes meant that somewhat severely, and for a reproach: but it is an exquisite account of the nobler laughs, those of perceptive joy. To find the intrinsic value of Webster the tragedian, or of Marcus Aurelius the tragic, perfectly estimated and set down, raises a “sudden glory” in the reader, a joy which laughs at the perfect capture of a truth, the perfect triumph of *the* truth: and the reader knows that the writer of the royal sentences had his “sudden glory” also, the joy of having created what is “very good.” Most of us view art and all intellectual products with far too awed a seriousness: we cannot take them radiantly; we shrink from gaiety in high places, we check the incipient smiles. Humour in the

"hieratic" Mr. Pater! It seems a sacrilegious thought. But the humour is there, there in profluent abundance, as it is in Plato and in Berkeley. . . .

Distinction could not fail to wait upon Mr. Pater's lightest word and work: distinction, which means an exquisite nicety of carriage, at once natural and cultivated, equal to all occasions and never doffed. For he respected the universe, and neither optimists nor pessimists do that. He felt himself to be moving among mystery and beauty, things exceeding great. He spent his life in realising how his fellow-men of the past and of his day behaved themselves under those conditions, what potencies and possibilities were theirs: he was clear of flippancy and of pedantry. Confronted with the world's "magnalities," or with its ephemeral littleness, his heart burned within him, and his fine spirit was finely touched. Of great men only can that be often said, and of good men, whose greatness is to be good and unknown.

### III.—MR. PATER AND HIS PUBLIC

[*The Academy*, Oct. 13, 1900.]

SHORTLY after Mr. Pater's sudden death it was the present writer's bitter-sweet privilege to examine much of his unpublished and unfinished MSS.: fragments of rich treasure were there, unfulfilled promises to us of fresh delight in the perfected achievements of his lovingly laborious art. It had been less sad to have seen nothing; to have been untantalised, unprovoked, by the revelation of what might have been but for that swift intervention of death. Fifty-five years of life, some thirty of literary labour: it affords room for production in goodly quantity when, as in this case, there are also leisure, felicitous circumstances, scant hindrance from the pressure of the world. Yet Mr. Pater published but five works. Since his death there have been published three volumes, or, if we take note of a privately

printed little volume, four. Only one of his works is of any considerable length, designed upon an elaborate scale. *Gaston de Latour*, which would have been, in that and other respects, a companion of *Marius the Epicurean*, is a fragment. To the reckoners by quantity this does not seem a notable tale of work achieved, designs accomplished. True: but to the worker himself, in the first place, and secondarily to all who knew him, it represented as great an amount of intellectual and emotional toil and pains as those thirty years could contain. The fruits of them are presently to be offered to us in an especial form of honour, in an *édition de luxe*.

Certainly, if jealous vigilance on behalf of artistic purity, and the utmost strenuousness of æsthetic self-examination, ever had their consequence in work worthy of distinguished honour, Mr. Pater's work is the consequence of those disciplinary virtues. The edition will present its possessors with nothing of "happy negligence," easy inaccuracy, blemishes of haste or indifference or ignorance or sloth. The athlete, whether of Greek games or of philosophic study, or of religious passion, or of artistic devotion, was ever an image dear to Mr. Pater; asceticism, in its literal and widest sense, the pruning away of superfluities, the just development or training of essentials, the duty of absolute discipline, appealed to him as a thing of price in this very various world. He wrote with certain literary virtues, in what theology calls the "heroic degree" of virtue, and was obedient to "counsels of perfection": the right word for the right thought, the exact presentation of the exact conception, matter and manner "kissing each other" in complete accord, and truth throughout prevailing. With what austere patience, what endurance of delay, he wrought for that, content with nothing less, even physically hurt and vexed by less! To disentangle good from evil in the conduct of life, to be a master of honest casuistry in the matter of moral right and wrong, tasks the holiest of men

hardly; and Mr. Pater, beyond most writers of his time, felt the hardness of the kindred task in art. Clearness of vision, integrity of thought, he held difficult of attainment, exacting ideals. We find him always striving to disintegrate, to set free, in dealing with an age or a temperament or a work of art, that soul of value which makes it what it is, makes it important, considerable, vital. Others might think themselves "born free" of the kingdom of art; with "a great sum," at a great expense of the spirit, distrustful of light first impressions, Mr. Pater acquired his freedom; and so, little modern writing is so remarkable for its air of finality. His reader may dissent, but can never doubt that Mr. Pater has expressed what, for himself at least, is the last truth, or a part of the last truth, about Wordsworth or Botticelli or Lamb or Plato; never doubt that every sentence, in its every phrase and word, represents a profound quest after exactitude, and had its discarded predecessors. Had he, as the saying goes, had "nothing to say," such intensity of workmanship would have perforce been ranked beside the foolish and vain kinds of Alexandrianism, Ciceronianism, Euphuism. Having had much to say, his zealous resolve to say it in a form of ultimate precision did but mean that, to his mind, anything short of entire correspondence between the things to be said and the mode of saying them was an injury and an insult to those things. To any readers, should any still exist, who conceive of Mr. Pater as primarily an artificer in words, let us commend the consideration of this fact: that wherever a sentence or a paragraph fails in part to please, it is never through an affectation in language, some excess of curiousness and strangeness in the use of words, but always through a too great compression of meaning, assemblage of ideas. We do not claim perfection for Mr. Pater; but when we seem to take less than our customary delight in some page of his writings, it is because the man with much to say has been too much for the man who says

it. Wealth of thoughts, not of words, is to blame for any falling away from lucid grace in Mr. Pater; and such falling away is very exceptional and rare. Perfect correspondence between conception and expression was ever his aim, and miraculously well he was wont to find it: it was what he prized above all artistic excellences of a wayward and casual character. . . . .

FitzGerald, writing to an American friend, confesses more than once that he cannot appreciate Hawthorne, cannot take to him comfortably, though he feels that Hawthorne is a writer of distinction. These repugnances, or, in milder phrase, ineffectual attempts at admiration and enjoyment, are matters of temperament. We can drill and school ourselves into respect for a writer, seldom into genuine pleasure in his writings. Mr. Pater brought to bear upon his large scholarship and various culture a personality of exceeding distinction, an individuality most marked. His works have plenty of pathos, plenty of humour, an abundance of human sympathies; he can dwell upon "little" common things with no less pleasure than upon the Roman Catholic Church or the genius of Michael Angelo. It is wholly a misconception to conceive of him as confined to the chambers and precincts of a palace of art, shudderingly averse from the spectacle or the intrusion of the "vulgar" world. Yet, if his inevitable mode of presenting life and thought distress you, if his style, which is himself, displease you, you will with difficulty see the rich appreciation of life in his books, his faculty of intimacy with the ways of life and feeling among many various vanished generations of men. We speak of writers who make an "universal appeal." The phrase is very questionable, even when applied to Homer, Shakspeare, the Bible, to Rabelais or Cervantes. And assuredly it is no reproach to any writer that he is not, probably will never be, widely popular. Messrs. Macmillan's *édition de luxe* of Mr. Pater is to consist of less than a thousand copies: that number,

for certain, does not profess to represent the number of those who honestly delight in him, of those to whom his genius is a friend, and full of charm. But, if it did, were that anything against him? To court obscurity by wilfulness is not the same thing as to accept it upon the dictates of conscience, by obeying the *daimon* within you and "hearkening what the inner spirit sings." Mr. Pater kept the laws of his literary conscience as the monk keeps the rules of his order: their rigour was often burdensome, but relaxation would have been treason. They limited his productiveness and the number of his readers, but they were imperative; self-dedicated to his art, he accepted its limitations. If he died "leaving great" prose "unto a little clan" of appreciators, "a little clan" sure of increase and of successors, *satis est*, for him as for them. "It is not to be thought of" that Marius and Sebastian van Storck, and Duke Carl and Denys of Auxerre and Emerald Uthwart, should fade from sight with all their plenitude of bright wistful youth; that the portraits of Ronsard and Montaigne, Marcus Aurelius and the Christians of Rome, should lose their poignancy and fascination. None will surpass in nobility of interpretation those lectures upon Plato and Platonism given at Oxford; few will with greater subtlety of skill pluck out the heart of the secret than he who explored and expounded the secret of Coleridge, Sir Thomas Browne, Winckelmann, Giorgione. Courtliness, suavity, an elegant severity, an excellent persuasiveness, are qualities making for life in literature; they are preservatives against decay, a "savoursome" salt. And Mr. Pater could be, in a peculiar and characteristic way, almost homely also, with little confidences and asides to his reader. Many pages, to some honoured with his friendship, recall the gravely measured voice, in which there was often an undertone of quiet humour, gentle irony, delightful and bland. Learned as he was, he wore his learning lightly. It is possible to read *Marius* over and over again, and at each



reading to discover some fresh proof of those toils and studies whence sprang the book, but which were carefully bidden to conceal themselves. If there be weight in all his writings, there is no touch of pedantry; that was as far from him as slovenliness and flippancy. He will live, indeed, by virtue of much else, but in great measure by virtue of the loveliness, the winning personality, of his gracious writings. There is a sedulous avoidance of "I" in them, yet they have some spiritual affinity with Montaigne and Lamb. They will live, "if precious be the soul of man to man." Their *édition de luxe* will prove no sumptuous casket enshrining fine gold waxen dim, scentless spices, and treasure turned to dust.

#### IV.—THE WORK OF MR. PATER

[*Fortnightly Review*, September, 1894.]

THE loss to the ranks of English writers through Mr. Pater's death is a loss something like that suffered at the death of Rossetti or of Arnold. Most writers who die deserving, or possessing, less than a magnificent fame, leave colleagues behind them, and are sure of successors: they are neither incomparable nor irreplaceable. But there are in almost every generation two or three men of the fine arts, whom a discreet judgment may not, or dares not, class with the greatest; yet from whom it cannot withhold the praises due to genius of a resolute and rare distinction. It is their common fate to be loved by their wise lovers more honestly and more intimately than are some greater men; and to be placed by their foolish lovers among the greater, or above. The mere thought that this poet and that painter have won no vast applause beguiles their votaries into acts of private canonisation, not without a certain pride in the enjoyment of so special and refined a worship. But Mr. Pater, at least, is an artist, a scholar, most properly approached in a

spirit of aversion from all extremes. He was ever intolerant of haste and heat.

In more than twenty academic years, of which the public duties harmonised with the private pursuits, Mr. Pater finished five books. They consist of twenty essays, ten lectures, four brief imaginative studies, and one of an ampler range. His uncollected writings, in each kind, would fill scarce more than two volumes. And the secret of so sparing and fastidious a production may be found in the famous lines of Gautier :—

“Oui, l'œuvre sort plus belle  
D'une forme au travail  
Rebelle,  
Vers, marbre, onyx, émail.”

*Verse*, yes ! that is obvious ; but what, in modern England, of *prose* ? Assuredly, we have had prose artfully simple and prose defiantly forcible : we have had, to take but those, the admirable varieties of Newman and Carlyle. And fanciful prose has abounded, flowery, picturesque, emulous of poetry ; *emblema vermiculatum*, intricate mosaic-work in words. But most of our writers have written prose, as M. Jourdain spoke it, unconsciously. Verse, indeed, so they seem to say, comes by divine grace assisting infinite effort ; but prose is an universal gift of nature. That was not Mr. Pater's creed, nor has it been the creed of the masters ; and he set himself, with a passion for the pains of art, to work in a prose which should be completely faithful to his conception of that art's capacities ; and, necessarily, in a prose of which the style should be congruous and at one with the thought committed to it.

At the outset, it is clear that we have here an artist of the severest kind, one enamoured of patient waiting upon perfection, and content with any toil so he may attain it : and perfection is not popular, unless in works of an unexacting character. Persistence in perfection, a vigilance never relaxed, an ascetic austerity of carefulness, cannot fail to

vex many: the puritan and precisian of art can become no less irksome than his fellow in life. To all of us at times, to some of us always, there comes a sense of oppression from the sustained grandeur of perfection in Michael Angelo or in Milton. A caprice born of revolt against restraint, some little flagging or failing through weariness, would give relief. Apollo with his bow ever bent! Homer not suffered to nod! The wisdom of the world has pronounced against that. Even epicures in artistic taste sometimes, like the youth of Lord Beaconsfield's invention, "rather like bad wine; one gets so bored with good wine." But there is not one page in Mr. Pater's writings on which the most trivial carelessness can be detected. Think what the reader may of the beauty, or the power, or of the lack of them, in this sentence or in that, he recognises the predetermination which has set each word in its place, precisely as he finds it. Raphael, true scholar that he was, seems always, writes Mr. Pater, to be saying: "I am utterly purposed that I will not offend." It is equally so with himself. But there must always be a class of readers to whom the acts of "recollection" and of "attention" (in the spiritual sense), necessary for the enjoyment of his work, are a bodily distress; and in this, as in much else, he resembles the laborious and enduring Flaubert.

Since the dramatic instinct is always strong, even when the drama itself is feeble, it is curious to note the ways in which that instinct insists upon finding satisfaction. Carlyle takes dramatic history; Landor, dramatic dialogue; Browning, dramatic monologue. Mr. Pater took criticism, and from his effective hands it issued with the charm of profoundly imaginative thought, clothed in language of a triumphant nicety: language which has in it this at least of the master, that it is inimitable, alive with felicities that die in another setting. For, lover of words that he was, of words for their soul's sake, he sought out an exact correspondence between the word and the thing; valuing truth

of expression to the utmost, and confident that such truth, really found, would convey with it a reasonable beauty. His desire was to ascertain, through a solicitous expense of pondering, just how things, works of art, or periods of time, or modes of thought, or ways of life, looked to him ; he disencumbered them from their superfluities, and obtained an ultimate vision of them, before the mind's eye, clear and clean. He held that it was the virtue of criticism to purge away the cloudiness of sight which makes us apprehend things in a twilight or a mist ; to discern them in their true proportions and values, not in the confused obscurity of a general impression ; and he waited for this illumination patiently, discovering, little by little, the truth of his theme, as memory recaptures, bit by bit, the very fact for which it explores the past. And so, to the picture, the countryside, the man, the theory, to whatever be his theme, seems added his vision of it, as something no less real than itself ; his readers remember his criticisms, as they remember works of the arts avowedly creative, with a like dramatic vividness. His thoughts come to us, as it were, in an embodied form and substance, with clear colour and definite outline ; like the ideas of Plato, ever tending towards a personality. As vague religious emotions to theology, so are most critical sentiments of our day to his criticism,—uncrystallized, uncertain, undefined ; in a waste, or, if you will, a garden of pretty words and fancies, you wander without aim or end ; or you listen, at another time, to an uninspired exposition of worthy commonplace. But in reading Mr. Pater there is felt that joyous sense of the need for discipline and exercise of mind which good writers demand of us : the sense that here are beauty and charm and strength which have not come at random and without pains, but are the fruits of deliberate labour. We feel it, not through any sign of strain in the finished work, but through that prevailing air of mastery over hard materials, of compliance with arduous conditions, which are among the best delights of

good writers and of understanding readers. Victory exhilarates. From his first essay, down to the praise of Dorian discipline in his last book, Mr. Pater loved the travail of the soul in art; his was something of the priest's, the soldier's, abiding consciousness of law and limitation in their lives; orderliness, precision, ritual rigour, were dear to him; and to the strictness of artistic duty he gave the obedience of one under the salutary command of a superior.

His care was for the *magnalia mundi*, and the *mirabilia*; he might, with Keats, have grouped together "sun, moon, and stars, and passages of Shakspeare." But he had no simply conventional feeling towards the great ages or the great arts, and towards the makers of their greatness; rather, he loved to be at home among them, with the intimacy of a friend who knows more about the things and persons of his love than their obvious features. The Renaissance of Italy and France, the Antonine age, moments in the history of the Church or of philosophy, times of some unique appeal to him through their arts and ways;—these he studied until the first moving fascination of them passed into a personal sympathy. But while he was eminently a scholar, an academic, incapable of neglecting erudition and research, patient of long and tedious labour, yet he could never rest there: he must always clothe the dry bones with flesh. So he chose, or he created, men in whom the age, the art, the life of his theme should live and move, quickening it with humanity, animating it with a sensible joy or sorrow through the powers of pathos and of humour, the appeals of mortality which Virgil found so touching. His genius was happiest in this. With a kind of unconscious audacity, the living energy of his scholarship took him to the side of the long dead, and he understood them and lived their lives; or it set beside them a figure of his own creation, yet one of themselves. No one knew better than he that these creations and re-creations were "imaginary portraits," all of them. Prolonged study of

the past, through visitation of its homes and acquaintance with its works, makes no present contemporary with any past ; the widest learning and the truest love result in but a guess at truth, a dream that almost convinces. Our changed appreciation of things "Gothick" is the result of greater knowledge, and is so far truer than their appreciation by the eighteenth century ; but our æsthetic interpretation of them is not more conclusive. The man of physical science, foretelling discovery, has often surer familiarity with the future than has the historian with the past. It is the point of view that is valuable. To see all things in the past is impossible ; but genius sees best and the best things. Mr. Pater disengaged from the past what moved him most, fortified himself with positive knowledge, and let his imagination brood upon it, breathe life into it and make it his. The form into which he shaped the report of his imagination, though always beautiful and often powerful, was no last word upon the matter, even for himself. Even had his writings that pretence, style, that saving balm, would preserve them ; but what dust and ashes will lie thick upon the pretentious pronouncements of the modern writer, so anxious to tell us final truth that he forgets to charm !

Charm is well-nigh everywhere in Mr. Pater's work, a golden grace upon the delicate sentences ; and a charm that is strangely strong. Without quite realising the reason, we feel these gently persuasive pages to be as inevitably winning as the "quaint" speech of some excellent old writer. It is a quality that wakens friendliness in readers, and a sense of personal affection ; speaking of youth, of death, of little homely things, Mr. Pater in a hundred passages seems to have read his reader's heart : we come upon a simple sentence, exquisitely exact, and it is a transcript from ourselves. It was just so with us in childhood, at school, at Oxford, in this sad or glad experience ; no rare æsthetic emotion, the monopoly of culture, but some quite common thing. Other writers tell us of similar

things; but in modern times, only Cardinal Newman, besides Mr. Pater, tells us identical things, with an intense reality of phrase in their beautiful truth. This keeping close to life, a sensitiveness almost in excess, give to *Marius the Epicurean* its singular delight. A marvellous self-discipline has made the book; the writer upon such an age and theme, so rich in the highest sort of magic, might well have wondered at his own moderation, his loyalty to the instinct of art, which bade him leave unused so much, and choose so little, of all that wealth. The soothing invasion of Christianity into "that hard Pagan world," what effusion of sentiment, what profusion of rhetoric, the theme invites! But Mr. Pater, gladly enough, denies himself both. He takes a young Roman, and follows his meditative way to an early death; and his pains are spent upon suggesting just where and how the new power of consolation, the new spring of hope, the new strength of joy, would win welcome from that world of weariness and satiety. Little incidents and contrasts, touched with the deftest tact, convey "the moral." Marius himself is not, in fact, converted, though his death was "full of grace." Yet the sweetness and the greatness of Christianity steal over him, as over the reader, as though the writer "willed" it almost without words; whilst it is through his austere delicacy in using them that the miracle is worked upon us. Marcus Aurelius, "sad and splendid," Apuleius the golden, Lucian laughing not too merrily, a supposed author of the *Pervigilium*, they live here, lightly, surely touched, each contributing to Marius, some thought, half hindrance and half help, upon his pilgrim's progress. A line from Tibullus, a passage from the *Augustan History*, a suggestion from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, they go, cunningly and well, to vitalize the story of an age and of a soul; and from a great store of classical knowledge come dexterously managed details, realised and giving reality, none pedantic and none superfluous. But the dominant charm of the book is its passionate

simplicity of tone ; there is an emotion of deep delight in the recognition of beauty, a calming and grave beauty, evoked from daily natural things ; a fold of the distant hills, dreaming solitudes, clear water ; the ministrations of earth, with her silences and voices, that convey intimations of something hidden from the schools. And among them, as among the business and tumult of great Rome, goes this questioner of the oracles, with so much fire beneath his dainty and deliberate bearing, so much wistful anger and hunger of heart ; amorous of nothing else, unable to be at peace with less, than the *Deus absconditus* of his desire.

Marius has many brothers ; it is a temperament, a character, in which his creator took an evident delight. Youth, confronting this very visible world, yet upon a quest for some interpretation, harmony, "absolute" truth, which should make the vision, if not "beatific," yet somehow divine ;—that, to Mr. Pater, master of irony and of pity, was a theme of constant consideration. He had comparatively little concern for ages or for souls of a confident maturity ; he cared for them at their "new birth," with the morning dew upon them, or in their decline, amid autumnal and twilight influences. In either case there is a stirring of curiosity, a wonder about what is to come. Under the exhilaration of a fresh spirit breathing new life, or in the meditative questions of days slowly darkling, he felt an appeal to the senses of frank enjoyment or of chastening doubt ; there was greater room in them for sympathy than in the full pride and pomp of accomplished triumph. About times of assured success in art, times superbly at their ease, there is something of Ben Jonson's "insolent Greece or haughty Rome" ; they are "fat and well-liking," intolerably serene, seated on thrones, not needing that kind of generous concern, a rush of cordial understanding, which seems almost a piety towards less conquering times and persons. Watteau, Denys l'Auxerrois, Sebastian van Storck, Duke Carl of Rosenmold, Emerald Uthwart, Gaston de Latour,—



all enchantingly young, all, but the last, whose fate is yet "upon the knees of the gods," early dead; all, except Sebastian, eager animated athletes of life;—Mr. Pater has expressed through these his apprehensions of moving times and tendencies. Many another man might have written, I doubt not, written excellently, formal and set essays upon Spinoza and Holland, Goethe and his German precursors, and upon the other themes, with much elegant erudition pleasantly presented; but none would have turned us, with a glow of affection, towards that Dutch home, that German court, nor spoken to us with Mr. Pater's almost wistful tenderness of humour. In these finely-wrought miniatures of romance he works with a loving learning which leads him to no abstract theory, but to a delicate definition of what is characteristic in his chosen studies, through a dexterous arrangement of their choice contents. Each little touch is, as it were, a note of music, and has just that value in its own place which the harmony of the whole demands; there is no undue dwelling upon this or that attractive matter, to the detriment of the general scheme. Never violent, never vague, his style steadily and firmly prevails over us and keeps us listening to the close of the piece; the rhythm of thought and of expression are in complete accord, flowing quietly together. He surprises the secret of a place or way of life by a sort of still attention, watching, waiting, until the very truth of it is his by heart. And this preliminary patience makes his work quiet and strong; it has no doubts and hesitations, but confidence and calm. He tells his tale with the comfortable security of one telling the most familiar things; there is the accent of one speaking, say, about "the old home," with a gentle glow in voice and look. "Working ever," he writes of Lamb, "close to the concrete, to the details, great or small, of actual things, books, persons, and with no part of them blurred to vision by the intervention of mere abstract theories, he has reached an enduring moral effect also in a sort of boundless

sympathy. Unoccupied, as he might seem, in the great matters, he is in immediate contact with what is real, especially in its caressing littleness, that littleness in which there is much of the whole woeful heart of things, and meets it more than half-way with a perfect understanding of it." Such thorough affectionate apprehension of things, a going out of the heart towards them, was a first necessity to Mr. Pater, who never wrote of what he did not "appreciate." This constant cordiality of his writings makes them, for many readers, infinitely pleasant and alluring: books to read under the garden trees and by the fire. There is a kindliness in them, as in Browne, and Lamb, and Hawthorne, with much of their various musing melancholies, never bitter nor morose. When, as in the *Essay on Style*, Mr. Pater has no immediately human interest with which to deal, but a question of principle and theory, his own style loses much of its charm, and we see him, as in that essay, eagerly escaping from abstractions to dwell upon concrete illustrations, such as the example of Flaubert. For he valued supremely what he called *soul* in literature; and, as he expressed it: "There are some to whom nothing has any real interest, or real meaning, except as operative in a given person; and it is they who best appreciate the quality of soul in literary art."

It is possible that to his congenital distaste for what has no colour, form, warmth, play of life, is due a certain misconstruction of his "philosophy." He has been portrayed, in most imaginary portraits, as a definitely sworn follower of Epicurus, devoted to the arts in a spirit of the nobler sensuousness, to the exclusion of all concerns other than material. To see, hear, touch, feel, with a cultivated curiosity, a trained susceptibility; that, so runs this false interpretation, is the choicest life: to eliminate all vulgarity of dead commonplace, and live for a succession of exquisite emotions, the gifts of beauty in nature and in art. Assuredly, Mr. Pater held the power of recognising and of loving

beauty in the world to be a possession past praise, and a passionate constancy of concern for it to be no mean state of mind; but assuredly in no ignoble way. A care for beauty is not common now, and, possibly, has never been; a profound sense of its greatness, as a thing neither to be produced nor understood without infinite labour and patience, is but too rare. Mr. Pater was never more characteristically inspired than in writing of the discipline of art, its immense demands, its imperative morality. In his conception of it he had the austerity of Milton and of Wordsworth; he found no words so fit to express his conviction of its nobility, as words implying a sort of consecration and obedience. Things hieratic, ascetic, appealed always to him. Dissolute and lawless art, flung upon the world in a tumultuous profusion and disorder, was not art in his eyes. His favourite type of "hero" was *le bel sérieux*, self-contained, of an almost monastic habit, with the "white soul" of youthful Virgil, yet sensitive to everything fine in life. Pico della Mirandola, he wrote, is a true humanist. "For the essence of humanism is that belief of which he seems never to have doubted, that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality: no language they have spoken, nor oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal." In this, his own firm faith also, there is a pathetic note, and it is hardly too much to say that it predominates in all his writing: "L'imagination humaine est, au fond, triste et sérieuse." *Pietas* was a passion with him. It is strong in him when he dwells with a gently lingering, long-drawn music of tone, upon old, faded things: philosophies once triumphant, fashions once thought final, airs and graces long passed away, music never heard now. He enters the *vasta silentia* of old times, and loves to repeople mediæval homes and classic cities; to wander by

the rivers of old France, and through the hillside towns of ancient Italy; recalling this and that dusty memory to fresh life with careful reverence. At Assisi, he would forget neither Propertius, nor Saint Francis; at Aquino, neither Saint Thomas, nor Juvenal. No books are more full than his of gracious loving-kindness; of such tremulous and tender pity as would disgrace the hedonist in his Epicurean calm.

He stands quite alone. We sometimes hear of his "school," but it does not exist: it is a genius, as was Lamb's, unique. His *Renaissance* studies have induced a certain revival of interest in certain somewhat novel aspects of early France and later Italy: writers have written about certain kinds of theme, because of his writing. But none have caught his tones, their peculiar felicity and proper charm. The passage which in all his writings is most famous, and perhaps least characteristic, is that upon La Gioconda: least characteristic because, for all its beauty, least definite. And, being least definite, it has been most imitated in its perilous quality of "suggestiveness": from it has come, in direct descent, but of a degenerate and enfeebled virtue, many a vague and vaporous passage. For the rest, it is impossible to write like Mr. Pater, without his extraordinary patience and piercing power of vision to see things, "as they are," by first ascertaining how they are "to him." When reminded that *Art is long*, some flourishing modern writers seem to reply: *Then cut it short*; but they belong, in their contempt of patient pains, to "the crowd, incapable of perfectness." And, indeed, English literature in prose, since the comparative settlement of the language, has rarely seen Mr. Pater's equal for the union of so much ardent interest in his substance, with so much determination to make his form convey it perfectly. To write with this superlative accuracy and exactitude of phrase savours to us of affectation: it is from French prose that we expect it. But Mr. Pater had a courtesy towards language,

the material of his art : a sense of its essential dignity and fineness. Like his own Duke Carl of Rosenmold, he would have marble in place of stucco, and the gilding should be of real gold. The conventional literary language, which, in its worst debasement, will call a church a sacred edifice, is ever tending to obliterate those distinctions and proprieties dear to a scholarly sense, and to write in a level style, wholly uninteresting, whilst unnatural. "There is no Excellent Beauty," notes Bacon, "that hath not some strangeness in the proportion." Strangeness, a stirring of pleased surprise, the charm of an admiring wonder felt without disturbance, yet with something of a thrill, are elements in all the finest art : and, as language loses its "unchartered freedom," becoming fixed and formal, literary artists are increasingly forced to this "strangeness," which is to be had far less by a *bizarre* vocabulary than by a sensitiveness to the value, the precise value, of common words in their precise signification. *Mystery, economy, pagan, gracious, cordial, mortified*—to use such words, with just a hint of their first meanings, is for the scholarly writer and reader a delicate pleasure, heightening the vivid interest of a phrase. Mr. Pater's vocabulary is, for the most part, simple enough ; and much of his curious charm comes from such feeling for the associations of ordinary words. The effect of his style is often that of a courteous, somewhat old-fashioned talker, at once urbane and easy, always leisurely and distinct. For, intricate as he can be, especially in his later work, the intricacy is not a German clumsiness, nor the involution of Milton, nor the complexity of Thucydides : there are balance and lucidity of aim, an orderly unfolding of thought. His way of work denied him certain advantages at the command of less weighty and methodical writers : versatile brilliance, a mercurial agility, flashing plays of fancy ; he had always something of that singleness of purpose and absorption in the theme before him which distinguished a century of English writers whom he did not intimately relish : the

century of Addison and Johnson. A constant attention to minute proprieties can hardly go with any wild rapidity of wit. Wit is a shooting star; humour, a quiet and enduring glow; and humour, the humour of Lamb writing, not upon Roast Pig, but upon Old China, was an element in all that Mr. Pater did.

Another "strangeness" worked in certain of his conceptions which have a captivating vividness, sometimes whimsicality, of effect. Breakings-out of pagan passion in Christian days, cloistral places; Apollo, surely, and Dionysus, radiant again, or suffering in the chilly light of the new world, but, in either case, exercising an uncanny, devilish influence;—so, with cunning magic, Mr. Pater would embody the feeling of revulsion towards the ancient ideals of sensuous liberty or servitude in the sunlight and open air. "The fiend Apollo!" sings Cowley. Mr. Pater discerns the troubling element of paganism, never exorcised into safe banishment, at work in various forms: pantheistic philosophy, the delirious ways of "mediæval love," strange possessions and subtle hauntings, antinomian conclusions from Christian premises. Again, in Tennyson's phrase, "the passion of the past!" Strongly drawn towards the Hellenic world, upon which he wrote so well, a little in the fashion of Paul de Saint-Victor, Mr. Pater seems unwilling to think of it as really gone, consigned to the learned and to museums. He detects it still with us, now as a wild sort of enchantment, now as a delightful and tranquillising source of wisdom.

Among his latest writings was a stately and impassioned praise of Sparta, her superb severity and cleanliness of ideal. He loved, also, to trace the mystical and sterner elements underlying the Hellenic "blitheness" and civility. In truth, his whole work treats of influences, the coming in of a new spirit, the re-assertion of an old, their mutual play; there, for him, is the dramatic passion of life, in a kind of prophetic feeling and apprehension. Denys l'Auxerrois, "a lover of

fertility in all its forms, in what did but suggest it, was curious and penetrative concerning the habits of water, and had the secret of the divining-rod. Long before it came, he could detect the scent of rain from afar, and would climb with delight to the great scaffolding on the unfinished tower, to watch its coming over the thirsty vine-land, till it rattled on the great tiled roof of the church below ; and then, throwing off his mantle, allow it to bathe his limbs freely, clinging firmly against the tempestuous wind, among the carved imageries of dark stone."

An instinct that foretells or forewarns of a gracious rain, or of a beating storm, soon to fall upon men's spirits, in Renaissance, or Reformation, or Revolution, seemed to Mr. Pater the gift of profound and passionate natures, who share "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come." Little things, changes, say, in the fashion of decorating our houses, had for him an inherent deeper meaning : as to Plato, change in a nation's music meant change in a nation's laws. The setting of our lives, though it can be but the setting, works upon them strangely ; and inanimate things come to be for us, as to primitive or savage man, "full of souls," full of personality, with power and virtue in them. The pensive diarist, through whom Mr. Pater discourses of Watteau, prince of court painters, writes in her delightful way : "He has completed the ovals, The Four Seasons. Oh ! the summer-like grace, the freedom and softness of the 'Summer,' a hay-field such as we visited to-day, but boundless, and with touches of level Italian architecture in the hot, white, elusive distance, and wreaths of flowers, fairy hayrakes and the like, suspended from tree to tree, with that wonderful lightness which is one of the charms of his work. I can understand through this, at last, what it is he enjoys, what he selects by preference from all that various world we pass our lives in. I am struck by the purity of the room he has refashioned for us : a sort of *moral* purity ; yet, in the forms and colours of things." In a great

variety of ways Mr. Pater pourtrayed the physical effect of beautiful things, whether seen, or heard, or believed, or felt. Thus, for a supreme example, it seemed to Marius, at that first Mass in the Cecilian villa, that "as if some profound correction and regeneration of the body by the spirit, had been begun, and already gone a long way, the countenances of men, women, and children had a brightness upon them which he could fancy reflected upon himself." The breath of the spirit, at rare seasons of time, renews the face, not of the earth only, but the very faces of men no less; and things in which fine beauty is present, have a like power, each in its degree, upon the beholder of them, the dweller among them. So, writes Mr. Pater, Wordsworth "conceives of noble sound as even moulding the human countenance to nobler types"; and so Plato would have his youth "dwell in a land of health, amid fair sights and sounds, and receive the good in all things; and beauty, the effluence of fair works, shall flow into eye and ear, like some salutary wind from a purer region, and draw the soul insensibly, from earliest years, into likeness and sympathy with the beauty of reason."

In all this mode of seeing things, and of undergoing their influence, the inflowing of their spirit, there is a mysticism not unlike Swedenborg's doctrine of "celestial correspondence": or that mystical interpretation of nature so necessary to Newman; as when he says of the angels: "Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect is, as it were, the skirts of their garments, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God in Heaven": so to speak, a sacramental and symbolic theory of the universe, which *Spiritus intus alit*: whereby, as Mr. Pater has it, "all the acts and accidents of daily life borrow a sacred colour and significance." A perpetual wondering joy in the messages brought by beautiful things, through their visible forms, was a kind of worship to him: he had a Franciscan poetry in the almost childlike freshness of his



delight in them ; though "refining upon his pleasure," as Congreve put it, he carefully sought out the precise secret of the delight. This poetry turned the blossoming of flowers, the genial sunlight, the gliding of cool waters, into a sort of ritual, devised by the Divine Wisdom, *fortiter sauviterque disponens omnia* : and the creations of art had an exaltation in them as instinct with sacred fire. Thus, the gravity and gentle seriousness of his "heroes" were the necessary carriage of men walking in holy places with an awe upon them : as Marius, amid the old country religion of Rome, "brought to that system of symbolic usages, and they in turn developed in him further, a great seriousness, an impressibility to the sacredness of time, of life and its events, and the circumstances of family fellowship ; of such gifts to men as fire, water, the earth from labour on which they live, really understood by him as gifts ; a sense of religious responsibility in the reception of them." In fortunate and chosen places, full of this divinity and mystery, Marius and his fellows seem to say :

"His ibi me rebus quædam divina voluptas  
Percipit atque horror :"

and, like the Amalekite king on the way to death, they "go delicately," but somewhat shrinking from its unknown dark and cold, dreading the initiation into its mysteries, and the cry : "*Kommt zur geheiligten Nacht !*"

This is the air or atmosphere of Mr. Pater's writings : this "hieratic" emotion. A devoted student of art, he took no part in what Fuseli calls the "frantic pilgrimage to Italy," or elsewhere ; he never, that is, wrote with an unconsidered zeal, nor in terms of merely general praise, about what moved him. Nor did he, as Fuseli says of Leonardo, "waste life, insatiate in experiment." Essayist, meditator that he was, he was never tentative, but the most decided of writers in self-knowledge. *Magica Sympathiae !* words borne upon the shield of Lord

Herbert of Cherbury, are inscribed upon the writings of Mr. Pater, who found his way straight from the first to those matters proper to his genius. And the proper expressiveness was there also, the singular modulation of style, with its appealing and persuasive quality. Like Marius, he felt his vocation : dedicating himself to literature, with a very deliberate consciousness of taking up no light responsibility ; in him, as in the ardent Flavian, "this scrupulousness of literary art actually awoke . . . a sort of chivalrous conscience . . . In those refinements of his curious spirit, in that horror of profanities, in that fastidious sense of a correctness in external form, there was something which ministered to the old ritual interest, still surviving in him ; as if here indeed were involved a kind of sacred service to the mother-tongue." *Nemo perfectus est*, says Saint Bernard, *qui perfectior esse non appetit* : it is as true in art as in religion. In art, also, "the way to perfection lies through a series of disgusts."

He stands alone, with no contemporary in any way resembling him ; and he recalls no one in the past, though here and there we can catch faint echoes and odours, as it were, from earlier work. Perhaps there is in him something comparable to the *curiosa felicitas* of our seventeenth-century poets at their happiest : Herrick, Marvell, Vaughan, in whom there is often that perfect harmony of matter with form which seems no less than a miracle, defying criticism, and purely a gift of the "Good Spirit," as one of them has said. We have had no lack of Euphuists ; Mr. Pater has prettily vindicated a certain sort of Euphuism, but our English Euphuists have not been strong writers, and their themes have been over-sweet and honied. Mr. Pater will discourse, say, upon Darwinism, or upon Heraclitus, or upon any other severe matter, yet without abating one jot of his care for beauty ; his Euphuism, if that be not too suspect a word, was no dreamy toying with rich and strange expressions. He gave much time to the æsthetic theorists

of Germany, Winckelmann, Lessing, Goethe, Hegel : such speculations as theirs agreed well with that cogitating and searching spirit strong in him. Such preoccupation with things of the mind, serious, solid things, as the German loves to entertain, was certainly not foreign to Mr. Pater, though it was in ways very far from German that he touched upon them. Still, a perceptible slowness and fulness in his expository periods, even an occasional heaviness, have something about them that recalls some German prose by great writers. In Germany also, as well as in the France of 1830, in Meinhold and Heine, as well as in Hugo and Gautier, he found the romantic strain that had charms for him ; and though Chartres and Rheims and Amiens brought back to him the Middle Age, strange and grotesque, and "gorgeous upon earth again," in full beauty and power, yet "under the spire of Strasburg or the towers of Heidelberg" he also loved to listen for "the melodious, fascinating voices of the Middle Age." Something homely, too, made itself felt in Germany, as in Holland, with its grave burghers and trim gardens, and cleanly, comfortable life. There was a quietism and a vein of the renunciant in his nature, which found a feverishness of brilliance in much French literature that yet he valued ; and he "went into retreat," as it were, by turning his meditations upon less agitating things, and an art, humbler perhaps, yet certainly mellowed and simpler. But to France of the Middle Age and of the sixteenth century, the France of the great churches, and the France of Ronsard and Montaigne, he devoted much pleasant labour, writing with something between the fervour of Michelet and the suavity of Renan in the attitude of his mind towards them. In the literature of modern France he most prized that lightness and courteous grace, becoming less characteristic there now than formerly, which have so long made French prose universally welcome. Intellectual adroitness, complete ability to do the thing desired and have done with it, naturally won his admiration ; though he

loved them best when softened and sweetened with just that charm of unction which is not there, as commonly it is in England, a gush of sentiment. Thus, praising Mérimée for his admirable qualities, he also points out "that singular harshness in his ideal, as if, in theological language, he were incapable of grace." But though we may discover, or imagine, in Mr. Pater's work French and German influences, there is certainly no writer of either race, as there is none in England, to whom he is indebted, as, for example, Arnold is indebted to Sainte-Beuve. The critics, concerned with a like range of interests, have not his dramatic, concrete manner; whilst his series of critical portraits is without parallel altogether. Rousseau, Goethe, Chateaubriand, Sénancour, with their querulous, weary types of the undisciplined and the dissatisfied, do not come within reach of an appropriate comparison.

If, echoing Casaubon in the Hall of the Sorbonne, we ask: What, with all these pains and cares, has Mr. Pater settled? The answer is, that neither he, nor any other critic of art, has ever settled anything; and that he has the distinction of having made no pretences of the kind. Bacon distinguishes between great poetry and history, by saying that the one submits its matter to the desires of the mind; the other reverses the procedure. It is true of all fine art, and criticism is a fine art. The desires of the artist's mind, the vision of his soul, the passion of his personality, apprehend beauty and truth, well or ill, finely or less finely, according to their own excellence. And truly, as Joubert said, we should hesitate before we differ in religion from the saints, in poetry from the poets: the chances are in favour of their being right. But only in virtue of their wisely discerning and deeply feeling spirit; by no absolute authority. "Spirits are not finely touched, but to fine issues," and when a Coleridge or a Lamb is finely touched, inspired, enlightened, whether by a flash of insight or by prolonged meditation, the issue is fine, his utterance

commands respect. But in the discovery of historical fact, it matters little or not at all who may be the discoverer; the value of the discovery itself does not depend upon the fine quality of the discoverer's mind. Indeed, Bacon's saying is but his enemy Aristotle's: poetry, and we may add, all imaginative literature, is more high and philosophical than history. All the ancient imagery of "the sacred fire," "the divine *afflatus*," "fine madness," and the like, applied to the artist, does but testify to the truth, that he must have before him a "master light" and guiding star. His sense of art's greatness will keep his conscience sensitive, make him tolerant of much labour, endow him with much patience, that he may be faithful to "the desires of his mind," evading no difficulty, allowing no compromise, his heart set upon perfection. What he gives us will at least be of fine interest; it may have a compelling and irresistible power upon us. Doubtless, there are many ways of work: the gradual labour of Gray, the lightning speed of Shelley; but the one spirit rules the diversities of operation.

It is possible to differ from Mr. Pater in many things: his estimate of Michael Angelo's religion, his views of Plato's doctrine, his interpretation of Botticelli's Madonnas, his whole conception of the Renaissance, with much else, have been thought by some dubious, if not perverse. Yet, that he is a writer of fine interest, whose work proceeds from a fine spiritual and intellectual passion, is not to be questioned; distinction is upon every line, an exquisite quality of mind. With Newman and Arnold, he has the secret of that ideal delicacy and graciousness, to which "that sweet city with her dreaming spires" can minister so well. Writing at a somewhat vexed time, full of challenges and of battles, he gave an example of perfect dignity, unwearied effort, clear aim. In an age weary and oppressed with a multiplicity of studies and the increase of knowledge, he produced but the fine flower of his taste and learning.

With no sort of contempt for popularity, he never courted it, never swerved from his deliberate path, never remitted the rigour of his artistic discipline. Not Milton himself more resolutely and passionately dedicated his days to the service of high and noble art ; and his work has upon it that air of tranquillity and serene accomplishment which comes of such devotion. There is a strange purity of effect, the result of the refiner's fire through which it has passed. The Welsh word for *white* means also something which is a combination of *holy*, *reverend*, *felicitous* ; much in the sense of Herrick's White Island. In the finer portions of Mr. Pater's work, there is a "whiteness," a "candour" indescribably felt, through this purity and cleanliness of it, as though there were "a sort of *moral* purity" in art of so scrupulous and dainty a distinction: the freedom from violence and coarseness, the gentleness and calm, helped by the constant ripple of quiet humour, serving to put the reader into a peaceful mood. That work so curiously wrought should have this effect, is an answer to any charge of excessive strangeness or artificiality. The styles of Carlyle and Browning may not distress us, but certainly we are violently and forcibly aware of them. Mr. Pater's elaborate cadences and constructions, his sensitive choice of words, bring with them no shock, but only a pleasing spell. It would be quite otherwise were Mr. Pater's style *tourmenté* : or, to borrow epithets from Maupassant, *bizarre*, *compliqué*, *chinois*. This tranquillity is one of the chief graces vouchsafed to a reverent study of things rare and fine : away from the bustling pettiness of meaner cares, a mind, travelling through the world of high beauty in form and thought and imagination, with ardour and in peace, cannot but take away something of the profound calm which rests upon the greatest art. Mr. Pater's reverence towards the achievements of genius, even in its less lofty manifestations, is of admirable example : it is a protest against the familiarity and the haste which think to

comprehend the masters by an easy and a swift acquaintance; a rebuke to impatience and to unreality in criticism; a vindication of scholarship and of art against those who profess to serve the second, while they ignore the first.

Amourists of perfection, each according to his capacity, in things great and in things little; workmen desirous of doing their best;—that is what Mr. Pater sets forth, now through a Michael Angelo and a Leonardo, now in a Luca della Robbia and a Joachim du Bellay. Equally strenuous and passionate are his workers with pure thought: Sebastian, with his eagerness over “Nihilism” and negation; Bruno, burning with the fire of his wild spirit. The life of the mind and the imagination becomes a scene of adventure and romance; the ends of its hope and aspiration seem like crowns and kingdoms, visible things to be won by conquest. There is no languorous playing with things of beauty, in a kind of opiate dream, to be found here. “If one had to choose a single product of Hellenic art, to save in the wreck of all the rest, one would choose from the ‘beautiful multitude’ of the Panathenaic frieze, that line of youths on horseback, with their level glances, their proud, patient lips, their chastened reins, their whole bodies in exquisite service.” That is from the earliest essay in Mr. Pater’s first book. “Platonic æsthetics, remember, as such, are ever in close connection with Plato’s ethics. It is life itself, action and character, he proposes to colour; to get something of that irrepressible conscience of art, that spirit of control, into the general course of life, above all, into its energetic or impassioned acts.” That is from the last essay in his last book. There is an interval of twenty-five years between the two passages; yet, if you consider it well, the latter is implicit in the earlier. It was with this constant sense of the relationship between discipline and refinement, circumstance and character, that Mr. Pater was fond of dwelling upon the value of our ancient public schools and universities in

England; he traced to their influence, unconsciously accepted though it may often be, much that is characteristically and happily English. For old institutions, thronged with memories, rich in history, for the very voices of their weathered walls, he had a feeling like that of Burke; and for "utilitarian" or "scientific" theories of education he felt an almost vehement dislike, so mechanical and impoverishing to the spirit did he think them.

There could hardly have been a greater loss to contemporary literature just at the present time; the champion of no school, he was almost alone among the writers of English prose in simply maintaining an ideal of high severity and excellence. His rare work, given to the world from time to time, quietly reminded a new generation of certain palmary and indispensable virtues, not easy of attainment, which are in danger of becoming old-fashioned or forgotten. Emphatically the scholar and man of letters, there was in his life and work a perfect expression of that single-hearted devotion to fine literature, yet without a shadow of pedantry, which is ceasing to flourish in the ancient academic places. There is yet deeper sorrow, upon which I cannot touch, save to say that to younger men concerned with any of the arts, he was the most generous and gracious of helpful friends. In due time, they will be able to think, with nothing but a reverent affection, of the admired writer at last laid to rest under the towers and trees of his own Oxford.

## CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND HER CHAMPION

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. . . "WHAT a story is that of that family of poets in their solitude yonder on the gloomy northern moors!" cried Thackeray. To quote Mr. Swinburne, it is to "the sweet



and noble genius of Mrs. Gaskell" that we owe our full and intimate knowledge of the tragic, strange, heroic history. She wrought it out with a Boswellian industry and enthusiasm, as a sacred and dear task. She made it a work of art, faithful to the truth, just in proportion and design, an abiding monument of love and labour.\* . . .

It is not the least notable feature of Mrs. Gaskell's work that she accomplished it with comparatively slight personal intimacy with Charlotte Brontë and her family; and further, it was not with women, not even with such women as Miss Martineau, that Charlotte Brontë felt the affinity of intellectual companionship.

With women, she is Miss Brontë of Haworth Vicarage, busied with common domesticities, with family joys and cares; she neither expects nor gives manifestations of genius and airs of intellectuality. With the men, some of them remarkable in literature, whose correspondent she became, she was "Currer Bell," strong in thought, rich in imagination, an ardent and inveterate critic of life and letters. Of this Charlotte Brontë Mrs. Gaskell knew little by experience, but she discerned the truth by unerring intuition. The result is an arresting portrait of the shy, home-keeping woman, who was also a persistent artist, the reverse of shy: of the woman who can write of Thackeray as equal writes of equal, but who cannot speak to him without nervous perturbation. And the portrait is intensely credible, intelligible, real; as we have said, Boswellian in persuasiveness. The late Mr. Hutton has said of Miss Brontë that "there

\* Mrs. Gaskell's noble *Life* of her great fellow-artist and friend stands in no need of elaborated praise; but it has for some time stood in need of precisely that reverent treatment wherewith Mr. Clement Shorter has treated it. His introduction, chronology, notes, are entirely helpful and welcome. Here is no re-writing of Mrs. Gaskell, no tampering with her text, but just those elucidations, comments, that additional or complementary matter, which the lapse of time necessitates. It is probably an edition of a classic as final as is Dr. Birkbeck Hill's edition of Boswell. We could not say more.—[L. J.]

is even an abruptness of outline, a total want of social cohesion, among her characters. They are sternly drawn, with much strong shading, and kept in isolated spheres." Mrs. Gaskell might well have been tempted to draw her heroine's own character after that fashion; to emphasise the contrast between the obscure parson's reticent, retiring daughter, and the writer of books that stirred all reading England. She saw deeper, felt more profoundly, than to do that; and her biography is a veritable interpretation. She makes us realise how all that is best and worst in the immortal novels springs from what we may call an intellectual and imaginative virginity, a vestal mind: the woman of few experiences, yet those few passionately felt. The sensitive, sensible woman cloistered in a far moorland village, took the advice of Sir Philip Sydney's Muse: she "looked in her heart, and wrote." Access to great libraries, large intercourse with the world of literature, freedom to travel and to live variously, might have wrecked her proper genius and diverted it from the inspiration of its native springs. "In concentration is strength," said Goëthe; and Miss Brontë, herein like Miss Austen whom she so amusingly and inevitably undervalued, would not have loyally served and obeyed her genius had she met with the chances and diverse opportunities of George Eliot or of George Sand. . . . She was none of Dr. Johnson's ladies: no Mrs. Thrale, Miss Burney, Mrs. Montague, Charlotte Lennox, Hannah More; no brilliant blue-stockings, no queen of *salons*, no intimate of wits and statesmen; no elegant candidate for the honours of Sir Joshua's canvas, the whispered compliments of Burke, the rounded nothings of snuff-box-tapping Gibbon, the dear impertinences of Boswell. Yet she lived a full life in her brief allotted period. Not a peopled, thronged, frequented life, but one passed in the almost visible society of a few profound emotions, a few deep joys and sorrows, a few ardent aspirations and desires. . . . She was no "woman of the world;" but she was a woman

of her own world, her world of the flesh as of the spirit. . . .

Nothing, in French phrase, "leaps to the eyes" more saliently and vividly, upon any reading of Charlotte Brontë's novels and letters, than her entire sincerity of mind and spirit, of imagination and thought. Her splendours and her absurdities, her loves and her hates, are absolutely her own, unborrowed from the influences of culture, of society, of the *Weltgeist*. She admirably exemplifies Mr. Ruskin's saying, that genius consists, not in originality but rather in genuineness: in that supreme conviction of the artist that his work must be done in this and in no other way; in the feeling that faithfully and fearlessly to execute his own conception is to obey a divine command, the will of eternal beauty and truth. Charlotte Brontë knew to the full how the artist both masters and is mastered by his art, and that in the very act of creation there seems to be, and is, a "something not himself making for righteousness," for artistic rightness and justice. So she writes to Lewes:—

"When authors write best, or, at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them, which becomes their master, which will have its own way, putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new-moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones. Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we, indeed, counteract it?"

When a sovereign of men objected to a sovereign of music, that there were too many notes in a certain passage, the answer was: "Sire, there are just the right number." That was the kind of reply that Charlotte Brontë made to her critics: "It happened so, and not otherwise. I saw it, heard it, and refuse to lie about it." The world of her imagination was *terra firma*, not any Cloud-Cuckoo-Land, wherein anything may happen anyhow. She was capable of writing to her friends, as Balzac wrote to his, news of

her imagined characters and creatures: "Do you know that So-and-So is dead; Such-an-One married? Is it not wonderful?" At the date of *Villette* she had not read the mighty Frenchman; but Harriet Martineau discerned in that glorious masterpiece an affinity with his genius. It lies in a common passion of reality, conviction, belief in their creations: both writers make an "act of faith" in their imaginations. The shy, strong woman whom, in her circumstances and in her character, we might almost call the nun of English literature (if the title did not belong of right to Miss Rossetti), vowed obedience to the precepts of her art, faithful in the letter and in the spirit, resigned to her own inspiration. She could not have written what Walt Whitman calls "books distilled from books." She wrote books distilled from life, from personal intuition, from the intimations of the spirit, from the voices and the silences of nature, from acquaintance with grief, from an impassioned pondering. Her writings,—we do not say it wholly for praise! have little savour of libraries, little air of moral purpose, little suggestion of "the literary life." But in all that she wrote, whether novels or letters, there is a wealth of words which, "if you cut them, would bleed": words vital, sensitive: not dead, but "quick."

. . . An enchanting, an invigorating freshness, an incomparable vividness, distinguished her life, her letters, her novels: fruits of that unsophisticated sincerity. She might err or stumble through ignorance or through prejudice, from inexperience in fact or from limitation of view, but never at any conscious sacrifice of truth. When, to her measureless amazement, she found herself here and there accused, even by friends, of an unwomanly "coarseness," she took no public heed; she altered nothing; she held on her way, she obeyed the *daimon* within her. Infinitely characteristic is the last page of her masterpiece, *Villette*. Her father pleaded for an "happy ending;" he could not endure the thought, nor face the fact,—who can?—of

M. Paul Emanuel's death. Miss Brontë knew, we all know in our hearts, that he did die and must have died ; but, to meet her father's touching desire halfway, she affected to leave it an open question. Definitely bring the little, imperious, and adorable lover safe home from sea to Lucy Snowe and marriage, she would not : that was an artistic outrage, a falsehood to fact. But the sentimentalist is allowed to believe it, if he can and will. She had faced tragedy and walked with sorrow ; she had known the special pang of *desiderium*, of the vain backward look that rests wistfully upon graves. With all her quietness, shyness, seclusiveness, she was the bravest of women in things of the spirit ; she could be stern to herself, to her art, and contemptuous to the deserving of contempt. Her writings and herself take a proud delight in the purity of passion, in the indomitable courage of high emotion. That singular and pathetic artist, the late James Smetham, writes thus, in a letter too long for full quotation, concerning the Brontë novels :—

“They are,—Currer Bell's particularly—so far autobiographic that one looks on them to be important revelations of a life that has been lived, and of thoughts that have been thought ; no frivolous, unworthy, ambitious life either, but something pure, strong, deep, tender, true, and reverential ; something that teaches one how to live. I know this, that I perceive principles and motives and purposes nobler than my own in several aspects of that quiet, shy, observant, and yet powerful nature which calls itself ‘Jane Eyre’ and ‘Lucy Snowe,’ and hovers over ‘Shirley’ and ‘Caroline Helstone’ as their presiding genius and instinct.”

These words of the strange artist, Methodist and Pre-Raphaelite, were written before the publication of Mrs. Gaskell's work : they show to perfection how faithful to her own self was this writer of stories which some critics have called crudities and caricatures. What she thought, felt, imagined, had for her the authority and authenticity of instant vision. Hence her marvellous reality : just so, we say of her scenes and portraits, it must have been. The

frequent splendour of imaginative expression has a certain effect of literal, simple truth. Mr. Meredith has pointed to her description of Rachel upon the stage as an example of English prose at the highest : and it is superb in phrase and movement, a prose both lyrical and majestic. Yet we read it as no conscious piece of purple writing, but as Charlotte Brontë's instantaneous, inevitable, indelible impression of the terrible actress. Life came to her so : of all strenuous writers, she can least be accused of straining the note, of lashing style into a rapture, of cudgelling the brains of sublimity. She was careful to fit and harmonise her words with her perceptions, but the result is always beautiful accuracy and not rhetoric. Her rare sense of humour saved her from extravagance ; and though *Jane Eyre* owes its chief faults to a certain deficiency of this preserving quality, humour is radiant in *Shirley* and glorious in *Villette*.

In one sense, Mrs. Gaskell, being a woman of genius, could hardly have failed to write a masterpiece : she had to deal with unique creatures, unique creations. The element of strangeness is in them all ; and the Brontë books, like their writers, seem to stand apart in a kind of proudly contented loneliness. "Take us or leave us," they seem to say : the five great books, like the two great writers, at once fascinate or at once repel. But so far as it is possible to educate and beguile readers into loving them, Mrs. Gaskell's work achieves the possibility. Brilliant critics have displayed their merits, patient chroniclers have explored the Brontë story : but all these are as nothing beside the first great champion of Charlotte Brontë and her fame, the first gracious and delicate historian of her line and family, the first recorder of those lives finely lived, the first to build over those sisters of sorrow a monument worthy of themselves. Inseparable from the high names of Charlotte and Emily Brontë is the name of Elizabeth Gaskell, who devoted to their service all the cunning and all the patience of her "sweet and noble genius." . . .

And the paramount interest of those lives, which Mrs. Gaskell's patient skill was the first instrument in revealing to the world, lies in the fact that, though they reveal a tragedy, a story of sorrows, there is nothing of that pitifulness so often attaching to the literature of literary mourners. The case of the disastrous Branwell excepted, here are noble griefs nobly borne ; fears stoically confronted ; disappointments met with redoubled endeavour : nowhere a touch of Wertherism, an hint of Byronism. We have nothing to forgive, palliate, condone, excuse, explain away in Charlotte Brontë. We have never cause to say : " Here is weakness, and here is vanity, and here is malice, but they are natural and pardonable." These writers of books quivering and aching with passion, lived lives of unshakable fortitude, and of integrity not less mental than moral. To use a somewhat undignified word, there was no flabbiness, no pettiness in their temperaments ; and even Branwell, who lived like an hysterical and besottedly vicious woman, died like a man, upright upon his feet, as the death agony seized him. A brave book, this of Mrs. Gaskell's : the record of courageous women, true, like Jane Eyre, " to the finest fibre " of their natures. We close it with renewed homage to the memories of its writer and of them ; close it also with Arnold's lines in memory :

" Sleep, O cluster of friends,  
Sleep ! or only when May,  
Brought by the west wind, returns  
Back to your native heaths,  
And the plover is heard on the moors,  
Yearly awake, to behold  
The opening summer, the sky,  
The shining moorland ; to hear  
The drowsy bee, as of old,  
Hum o'er the thyme, the grouse  
Call from the heather in bloom !  
Sleep ; or only for this  
Break your united repose ! "

Of a truth, in the last words of *Wuthering Heights*, we cannot "imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth"; and they had earned their slumbers.

## SAVONAROLA

[*The Academy*, Aug. 5, 1899; *The Daily Chronicle*, Sept. 14, 1901.]

THE most difficult historical characters to judge are those in which religion is a moving element, present in all their outward acts. It is easy to fling about such terms as enthusiast, hypocrite, fanatic, impostor: human nature is seldom so simple as that. Probably the most absurd and vulgar and revolting of religious frauds was that of Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet; yet it is impossible, upon a minute study of his amazing career, not to see that he half-deceived himself by his own lies, and was willing to die for them devotedly. Or, turning from low things to higher, no one now thinks Oliver Cromwell's a transparent character to read. All those wrestlings and writhings with the Lord, those bursts and snatches of struggling speech, as of a man talking in his sleep or thinking aloud in fitful soliloquy,—they show neither the manifest hypocrite nor the passionate idealist, but a pathetic mixture of both. The King's death: must he, ought he, to bring that about? The crown: should he accept or refuse? Is he, indeed, the Lord's Anointed, girt with the sword of the Lord? Has he verily an appointed work in England? He "waits upon the Lord" for answer, half of him filled with uncouth prayer and prophecy, the other with a keen political intelligence and worldly insight. And few famous men have more perplexed their contemporaries and posterity than Fra Girolamo Savonarola, son of Ferrara, prophet of Florence. He has been the theme of almost innumerable books, in which he figures as hero, humbug, martyr, apostate, illustrious saint, and melancholy example.



His portrait has adorned the chambers of Popes ; his statue stands beside that of Luther at Worms. Anti-clerical Italy claims him one of her champions ; clerical Italy has longed for his canonisation. Machiavelli saw in him but a political intriguer ; St. Philip Neri, a burning servant of God. "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then ! I contradict myself." By his own Florentines he was idolised and execrated, killed, and to this day venerated. . . .

"From the Church Militant and Triumphant we sever thee." "Nay ! from the Church Triumphant thou canst not !" So, in the last public utterances of the great and terrible voice, Savonarola, stripped of the noble Dominican habit, replied to the presiding prelate. One word more, but in gentle soliloquy, as he stood beside the instruments of death, the hanging chains and the faggots : "My Lord has suffered as much for me." A movement of the hand in benediction, and then the end, when, in the words of an English poet who also sleeps in Florence, "Savonarola's soul went out in fire," to be with Dominic and Dante. Human stupidity had achieved its latest triumph, to make the angels weep. Many in Florence there must have been who were afraid of the dark that night : who heard through it the thunder of a silenced voice, and saw through it the lightning of closed eyes. Others, perhaps most, may have turned to their sleep, murmuring the Tuscan equivalent of "His own fault, after all : now we shall have some peace and quietness."

Upon May 23, in the year 1498, in the Piazza della Signoria, that tragedy was performed. Upon the same day of this present year, and upon the same scene of his martyrdom and judicial murder, the atoning people of his Florence dedicated a memorial to Savonarola, "unjustly slain." The City of the Lilies, which sentenced exiled Dante to the flames, and gave to them her prophet of righteousness and judgment to come, has had more atonement to make than one. But her mind has long been

made up concerning Savonarola: it is with an effort that she thinks of him as a man of Ferrara, as not a native Florentine. The voice which mourned and cried aloud over the sins of Florence, as Cacciaguida mourned to Dante in the *Paradise*, is the voice of no alien in that city's ears. And the world has canonised him in its catalogue of the great and tragic: it says various things of him, but they are few who have judged him harshly. . . .

It may be thought that Savonarola has been more fortunate in his biographies than in his presentment and interpretation in imaginative literature. The chief attempt at such a treatment, George Eliot's, is a splendid failure, strenuous, full of zeal and effort, often within sight of a success never attained. Two great writers, one in youth, one in old age, projected works upon Savonarola: Gibbon, who planned a history of Florence under the Medici, naturally embracing a special study of Savonarola's "character and fall"; Tennyson, who meditated a poem upon his death. We may imagine the character of either portrait: Gibbon's, with its eighteenth-century hatred of "enthusiasm," his lack of spiritual sympathies, his scholar's impatience of extremes, yet with a purple splendour of handling too; Tennyson's, laying stress upon the opponent of corrupt authority, valiant unto death, but depicting an Englishman rather than an Italian. More precious, probably, than either of these would be the portrait that Carlyle could have given us to set beside his lovely and stern etching of Dante. For Dante and Savonarola are brother souls, and show it even in their faces: and Dante, lord of the brief and unforgettable phrase, could he have written of Savonarola, would have done it imperishably, once and for ever. As it is, we may well fall back upon his praise of Dominic, and apply it to Dominic's son in religion:—

"L'amoroso drudo  
Della fede cristiana, il santo atleta,  
Benigno ai suoi, ed ai nemici crudo."

"A very wonderful man, you will allow, my brethren, was this Savonarola," says Cardinal Newman, who adds, contrasting him with the Apostle of Rome, Saint Philip Neri : "for years he had his own way ; at length his innocence, sincerity and zeal were the ruin of his humility." That may be the truth : and yet, it may be to "consider" not "curiously" enough, "to consider so." For we find in Savonarola no personal pride or self-seeking, no obstinate advocacy of condemned views or rash opinions : we find throughout his career one consuming passion for the purification, not of the Church in her faith and organic structure, which he upheld to the full, but of the world which professed to walk in that faith. At the height of his influence over Florence was placed upon the Plazzo della Signoria the inscription : *Jesus Christus Populi Florentini Rex* : no Scottish Covenanter, no Puritan of New England, no frenzied Anabaptist of Münster believed more absolutely in that supreme and indivisible kingship. "Not," says Mr. Morley, writing of Machiavelli, "not for the ambitious and practical politician was the choice of Savonarola, who, at the moment when Machiavelli was crossing the threshold of public life, had perished at the stake rather than cease from his warnings that no good would come to Florence save from the fear of God and the reform of manners. . . ." Yes : he was on fire with a zeal for the reform of morals in Italy ; of general morality, as the principle of Christian states and communities : this, in strict conformity with the Catholic faith in which he recognised the perfection of revealed religious truth, and nothing in need of reform. He conceived of his mission as not directed to the patient conversion and reclamation of individual souls, but to a universal awakening of whole cities and territories, through the power of divine speech wherewith he believed himself inspired. Dante, that infinitely lonely man, dreamed much the same dream of a regenerate Italy, Florence, Rome ; he, too, scourged popes

and priests, though never papacy and priesthood ; but the wandering exiled layman was more of a recluse than the cloistered cleric. Savonarola, from the pulpits of San Marco and the Duomo, yearned to turn his dream into a reality : his was *vox clamantis*, not *in deserto*, but *in plena urbe*. An age of luxurious corruption, renascent paganism, hideous crime and moral laxity ; Christian upon the surface, indifferent or superstitious within ; resplendent with gorgeous vanities and cunning inventions and exquisite arts ;—such, to Savonarola, seemed the enemy assigned to the sword of his word. “Thunders of thought and flames of fierce desire” surged through his soul ; after a time, and for a time, he triumphed. Sacred oratory, able to inspire Michael Angelo at work upon the Sistine Chapel, thrilled Florence, and threw multitudes prostrate at his feet ; he found himself ruling where Lorenzo de’ Medici had ruled ; and it is clear that success overstrained his sober reason ; that *he* should have set up a reign of righteousness, abased the pomps of sin, purged the vicious and distracted Florence, marked him surely for a prophet whose utterance was that of God ! His earlier preaching was full of fiery apocalyptic warnings, of vehement appeals to Church and State, of sternest denunciation and pathetic entreaty ; but from that he passed to a perilous conviction of his prophetic insight into the immediate politics of the day, his divinely-given right to inspire and direct the policy of Florence, to defy authority in the name of higher authority. “If Rome be against me, know that she is not against me, but Christ,”—words unconsciously echoed by Pascal : “If my writings are condemned at Rome, they are approved in Heaven.”

. . . Vainly has the endeavour been made to make Savonarola out a successor of Wiclif, a precursor of Luther ; as Mr. Horsburgh well puts it, he is to be classed with “pre-Reformation reformers, such as Colet, More, and Erasmus.” His worst antagonist can bring against him no graver

accusation, as a Catholic, than that of technical disobedience to the reigning Pope, and a certain reluctance, almost from the first, to submit his personal claims and convictions to authority which he acknowledged to the full. Filled as he was with the consciousness of a prophetic mission directly entrusted to him by God, he never, when checked or hindered, thought of creating a schism, a new departure, justifiable in his own eyes and conscience. John Wesley, devoted to the English Church, at last started another organisation; Edward Irving, a far greater man, shook the dust of Scottish Presbyterianism from off his feet, in the "thrice holy name of God." But Savonarola lived and died a Roman Catholic who had no difficulty in saying to Pope Alexander Borgia: "Your Holiness holds the place of God on earth." The Church has pronounced that Savonarola's writings contain *nil censura dignum*; no such ecclesiastical thunderbolts as "temerarious, erroneous, pernicious, scandalous, damnable," have been discharged upon any utterance of his.

Cardinal Newman, in his famous *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, explaining the prerogative and the supremacy of conscience, declared that if called upon to drink to conscience and the Pope, he would toast conscience first. It was far more that conviction of mind and soul which brought Savonarola to his violent death than any want of humility. Perhaps the truest type of priest and prophet who falls through pride, is the melancholy Lamennais; "the great heresiarch," as Montalembert calls him; "one of the prophets of old," as Mazzini prefers to say. Part of our difficulty or perplexity in viewing Savonarola aright is inherent in the nature of his time and land, in the tangle of Italian politics, which Dante had known to his undoing, in the anomalous morals of the Renaissance age, in the intricacies surrounding and baffling the reformer. Had Savonarola lived the life of the itinerant preacher, passing from city to city with his message of appeal to the hearts

and consciences of men, but holding himself apart from the actual operation of States and governments, he would have died on his bed with none but friends about him. His chosen work was harder and nobler: to make of one Italian city a city of God, a holy commonwealth, through the faithful practice of Christianity in all the provinces of life. The aim of Lorenzo de' Medici was not ignoble, but it was not that. Inevitably, Savonarola had his enemies, his mockers, his slanderers, and those who bade him back to his cloister and leave matters of government to men of the world: Savonarola, impetuous, impatient, no easy man to deal with! How was your shrewd, money-making, not over-scrupulous citizen to sympathise with an idealist Boanerges, who meddled with everything in the name of Christ? The very intensity of spiritual fire and passion kindled from the pulpit of San Marco, as that surging voice rolled over the massed multitude, had its dangers. A great saint has defined the perfect spiritual state as that of doing the commonest things in the best possible way; Savonarola's ecstatic oratory, with its prophecies and visions, can hardly have conduced to that perfection. And yet the orator himself was a man of strong intellect and common sense, one to be reckoned with in practical affairs; no mere "hot gospeller," whose chief effect is to throw a crowd into devout hysterics. But the sublimity and simplicity of his ideal may have worked harm as well as good. "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" is a motto which has led men into perilous places. In Florence of the Renaissance, single-heartedness of purpose had a host of obstacles to encounter, and the indomitable Dominican must have known them all. He cared nothing: in truth, it is hard to imagine a cowardly Dominican. He was no pestilent obscurantist, sworn foe to classic literature and the revival of art: read carefully his extant works, and you will see that he was a man of sensitive taste, who drew a line between artistic licence and artistic liberty. No one who

has realised the moral degradation of his times, will reproach Savonarola upon the score of vandalism in his famous "Bonfire of Vanities." Those were times in which learned men, outwardly decorous and decent, wrote things in the name of learning which have no iniquitous parallel in the days of Catullus or Martial. And the man's huge heart, sick at these abominations, boiled over with holy rage: he felt that at any moment fire from heaven might descend to the destruction of such an age. Little blame to him if, consumed at heart with a vast and sacred indignation, he strayed beyond the strait bounds of ecclesiastical sobriety; little blame if, lover as he was of literature and art, he was sometimes narrow and over-puritanical in his views. With Alexander Borgia in the Chair of Peter, the very air seemed heavy and tainted with voluptuousness. But he was no fanatical enemy of beautiful culture, who numbered among his friends such men as Pico della Mirandola, Sandro Botticelli, and the Della Robbias. He did but place above all other excellences that of holy living. A massive man of impassioned simplicity, with something of an antique Roman worthy in the large outlines of his character: not subtle nor supple, but lofty and direct, he excites in us almost as much pity as admiration and awe: he meant so simply and so well, his failure was so perfect! . . . They hanged him, they burned him: it stands out as one of the world's central tragedies; it is among the most pathetically stupid of historical facts, this slaying of Savonarola. He was killed by the complicated and insignificant politics of the Italian States in the fifteenth century: for nothing diabolically heroic, like atheism, but for being politically in the way. . . . "Power," says George Eliot, "rose against him not because of his sins, but because of his greatness: not because he sought to deceive the world, but because he sought to make it noble." Perhaps, at the last, there may have crossed his mind those mournfullest of words: "*Popule meus, quid feci tibi? aut in quo*

*contristavi te? Responde mihi. Quia eduxi te de terra Ægypti, parasti crucem salvatori tuo."*

Many who have never known him would be the better for keeping the company of this "soldier-saint." Defeated he was, and put to a savage death; but as Walt Whitman has told us, there are times when "death and defeat are great." They were great when, from his swift agony, the white soul of Girolamo Savonarola flashed forth, and ascended into the immediate presence of his Master, *Jesus Christus Populi Florentini Rex*.

## LUCRETIUS AND OMAR

[*The Academy*, July 14, 1900.]

"LUCRETIUS," writes Mr. Sellar in his admirable chapters upon the poet, "contemplates human life with a profound feeling like that of Pascal, and with a speculative elevation like that of Spinoza. The loftier tones of his poetry, and the sustained effort of mind which bears him through his long argument, remind us of Milton." These are just comparisons. We might add Dante: he also could vaunt, with a *primus ego*, that he, first of Italian poets, had handled mightily a most majestic theme. But between him who, in Mrs. Browning's phrase,

"—denied  
Divinely the divine, and died  
Chief poet by the Tiber side,"

and the Persian with his roses and vines, nightingales and wine-cups, how vast the distance and the difference! Mr. Mallock\* is aware of it; but he finds a certain piquancy in the comparing and contrasting of the two Epicurean

\* *Lucretius on Life and Death*. In the Metre of Omar Khayyám. To which are appended parallel passages from the original. By W. H. Mallock. (A. & C. Black, 1900.)



poets, and has paraphrased some five hundred lines of the Roman in the famous stanza devised by FitzGerald for the paraphrase of the Persian. The result is fascinating, and a failure: to paraphrase Bentley upon Pope's Homer, "a very pretty poem, Mr. Mallock, but you must not call it Lucretius." Imagine Omar rendered into Miltonic blank verse, and you have some notion of the aspect of Lucretius in the Omarian quatrain. The tripping, discontinuous, epigrammatic quatrains have nothing in common with the slow-labouring, lingering thunders of the Lucretian periods, each line a triumph of tremendous music, and the complete period their concerted harmony. Mr. Mallock's bold venture is an excellent illustration of the interdependence of matter and form: translated into a poem absolutely unlike his own, even the thought of Lucretius, the genius of his mind, almost wholly disappears. Thus translated, he is not himself; he is any one of the countless poets who sing of the eternity of death and the sorrow of life: we might almost be reading Horace. The essential quality of the *Rubáiyát*, in point of form, is a swift brevity. The poet lets fall a stanza now, a stanza then, each isolated, self-sufficient, perfect; strung together, they are but a chain of variations upon the same theme. There is no laborious argument, no philosophic plan, no systematic unfolding of a scheme of thought. It is philosophy in snatches of song, doctrine by epigram, dropped casually with a charming nonchalance from the lips of a semi-serious epicurean mystic, unconscious of responsibility, incapable of huge toil. Lucretius is as profoundly and passionately an apostle and evangelist as Saint Paul; his is no light-hearted pessimism, no carolling agnosticism, but an elemental message to the sons of men. Open Omar at any page, and you will light upon some immediately intelligible stanza about the Why and the Whither and the Wherefore of things: open Lucretius at random, and you will find yourself in the midst of some long and wrestling argument or exposition.

Before Lucretius can chaunt that transcendant chaunt to the glory of deathless death, *Nil igitur mors est*, and do so in a prolonged strain of sublimity unsurpassed, he must patiently adduce some score of reasons, worked out with enormous effort, in which beauty of form is sacrificed to accuracy of matter. No poem in the world so impresses us as accomplished with groans and sweat of the brow, with the agony and strong crying of birth-pangs, as the *De Natura Rerum*: which, truly interpreted, means the Universe. Little,—no, to be accurate, nothing—as we know of Lucretius with absolute certainty from external sources, we can with some confidence conjecture much concerning his character from his poem; and we may feel sure that he did not write to please himself. He might have enjoyed his solitary broodings and contemplations in a somewhat grim silence; but, thanks to Epicurus, he possessed the pearl of great price, the verity of verities, and he was bound to communicate it to a world lying in the darkness of superstitious dread, of unnecessary sorrow, of calamitous ignorance. We do not feel that about Omar; he, says FitzGerald, “only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last!” Omar jests: there is no jesting in Lucretius. M. Martha, author of perhaps the best work upon Lucretius, concludes his volume thus: “*La véritable réfutation de la doctrine de la volupté est la tristesse de son plus grand interprète.*”

Mr. Mallock's interesting experiment is, then, more curious than valuable: a valorous attempt to bridle Behemoth, to put a hook in the nostrils of Leviathan. Passing over, as is but natural, the scientific and technical portions of the poem, and merely culling from it its “beauties,” he has given us an ingenious *pastiche* indeed, but done a fanciful injustice to the Son of Thunder. Mr. Pater has

spoken of the thunder and lightning of Lucretius as being "like thunder and lightning some distance off, which one might recline to enjoy in a garden of roses." For once we venture to question the felicity of a phrase from Mr. Pater; but Mr. Mallock seems to have accepted it, and in his version we read Lucretius in the rose-garden of Naishápur, beside the rose-besprinkled tomb of Omar. Little is here of the Lucretius who, as illustrious men of modern science are agreed, marvellously and by intuition anticipated important doctrines and discoveries of modern science; of the poet who rivals Goethe in the combination of scientific with poetic imagination. Here is a Roman Omar, strenuous and impassioned; no minstrel of smiling nihilism, but the deliverer of a vast evangel, the prophet of the peace of eternal death; a preacher akin to Thackeray's "weary King Ecclesiast," "the sad and splendid." All is vanity, but kindly death ends all, says Lucretius: Death ends all, says Omar, therefore let us enjoy life to the uttermost. Omar is the truer Epicurean: Lucretius has more than a little of the Stoic in his temperament, and his devotion to Epicurus was less upon the moral or practical side than upon the speculative. Clearly, he hungered after an interpretation of the universe, of "all this unintelligible world"; he found it in the atomic theory, as accepted by Epicurus from Democritus. It is hard to say whether it be right to call him atheist. "*Un grande poète athée,*" exclaims Villemain, "*voilà sans doute un singulier phénomène.*" Certainly few conceptions can be more strikingly strange than his picture of gods who reign, perhaps, but assuredly do not govern: idle beings, divine drones extraneous to the workings of the world, fixed in a dreamy immobility neither beneficent nor malevolent, not worthy of man's consideration. Such gods Lucretius contemptuously condescends to let exist; but the ruler of the universe is a blind necessity, the material law. The religious sense, as we understand it now, was no part of his nature; his devotion,

his most exalted feeling, is called forth by the contemplation of the reign of physical law and order, *suaviter fortiterque disponens omnia*. "I venerate the earnestness of the man," writes FitzGerald, who loved him, "and the power with which he makes some music even from his hardest Atoms." Can we say of Omar that we "venerate his earnestness"? Melodiously to dwell upon the melancholy of things is no hard occupation, and the philosophy of "Gather ye roses while ye may" is somewhat obvious. Critics have differed upon the quality of the faith that was in Omar: a frank materialist and sensualist, say some; a mystic veiling the ineffable truths in terms of earth, say others. It matters little, and both views may be right; certain it is that Omar was a true Epicurean, loving life and its brief pleasures, the sole tangible realities in a mysterious universe. Unlike, indeed, is he to that earlier tent-maker who "died daily" to this present world, and thirsted for that other which alone was real to him. And it is sure that Lucretius would have felt slight sympathy with the prevailing moods of Omar, the dreamy sadness, indolent wistfulness, luxurious brooding upon the nature of things. Sad as Lucretius is, he has the air of boldly and stoutly denying it, having found peace and joy in believing the atomic gospel, and trampled the terrors of religion beneath his feet: "*felix qui potuit causas cognoscere rerum!*"

Mr. Mallock manages with much dexterity the famous quatrain: for example:

"What though no statued youths from wall and wall  
 Strew light along your midnight festival  
 With golden hands, nor beams from Lebanon  
 Keep the lyre's languor lingering through the hall,  
 Yours is the table 'neath the high whispering trees;  
 Yours is the lyre of leaf and stream and breeze;  
 The golden flagon, and the echoing dome,—  
 Lapped in the Spring, what care you then for these?"

Yet, we repeat it, this is no measure for the organ music

of Lucretius: he would sound more like himself in the blank verses of Milton, the heroics of Ben Jonson, Chapman, Dryden, the Alexandrines of Hugo or Leconte de Lisle. Mr. Mallock's poem is pretty: there is infinite beauty in Lucretius, but no dancing prettiness. The terrible intensity of his marching music demands, for its transference into another tongue, the weightiest possible equivalent to the *gravitas*, the *auctoritas* of the noble Latin: who would translate *Paradise Lost* in the rhythms of *Emaux et Camées*, or the *Légende des Siècles* in the measures of *Hesperides*? The *furor arduus Lucreti*, as Statius has it, has nothing in common with the polished or chiselled elegance of Omar. Lucretius is the Michael Angelo of verse, a Titanic workman, compelling language to obey his sovereign will and fall into majestic cadence, thunderous, oceanic. Saint Jerome, in a sentence which has distracted every Lucretian critic, states that Lucretius composed his poem in the lucid intervals of insanity: it is impossible. The quatrains of Omar might have been so written; the colossal structure of the *De Natura Rerum* could not have been so designed and executed. But neither the classic Roman nor the mediæval Persian was mad; both kept a steady vision upon the world and life, both knew well what they were doing. Lucretius, like that later glory of Italy, the lamenting Leopardi, had sanity in the deeps of his strange soul, and the mind which soared and ranged beyond the *flammanitia mœnia mundi*, and saw worlds in the making, and the torrent of atoms, knew no delusion. Life and death appeared in no fantastic guise to this great iconoclast of superstition, this harrower of hell. Reason itself inspired the poem, thus justly appraised by the exquisite and worthless Ovid:

“Carmina sublimis tunc sunt peritura Lucreti,  
Exitio terras cum dabit una dies.”

## THE FOOLS OF SHAKSPERE

[From *Noctes Shaksperianae*, edited (for the Winchester College Shakspeare Society) by the Rev. Charles Halford Hawkins, M.A., President. Winchester and London, 1887.]

THE fools, by profession, of Shakspeare's making are something less than ten in number. Something less, inasmuch as amongst the fools proper and unashamed are not included such hybrid natures as Jacques and Malvolio. Two alone of them have certain names: Touchstone and Costard; their fellows passed into immortality nameless. In trying to give form and aspect to the feeling of them, "hard, hard, hard it is only not to tumble, so fantastical" are they and elusive. About them clings and rings an air charged with laughter breaking at the close, and radiant with glowing affection. In their quick interchange and whimsical play of phantasy with fact, souls heavy with the burden of tragic fates can find a wisdom hidden from the martyrs of sin and sorrow, unknown, from its worthy worldliness, to Othello and to Lear. Trouble and weariness and sour sorrow, from the girding lips of these fools, receive a light that transfigures with shafts of mockery and homely comparison. It is with us and them, as though the wise of the world, masters of lore and experience, stood by the world's ways casting their hoarded wisdom into the air and upon the wayfarers in peals of laughter and with gentle malice: an exaltation of the cap and bells, in a world where motley's not the only wear, but has disguises.

In this quaint fellowship of fools, five are noteworthier than the rest. Headed by the dearest of them, "the sweet and bitter fool" of Lear, they troop past in the Masque of Merriment to the jangling of sweet bells: Touchstone from the Forest of Arden, "*le bouffon Touchstone et la naïve Audrey*," laughs Gautier; Costard, from the faery or elf-land of Navarre; he of the Countess of Rousillon, "no

great Nebuchadnezzar," indeed, but "a shrewd knave and an unhappy"; and, to close the procession of Folly with Holiness, Sir Topas, demurely reading Rabelais, from the land of Illyria. "Infinite riches in a little room" are here; a medley of virtues and peccadilloes, malice and devotedness, jocund jesting and pitifulness. There lurks in this company of kindly cynics and flouting clowns no fool of the vulgar sort, no hireling whose humour rings false or vile; none such as vexed the austere, pure soul of Dante at Verona, where—

"There was a jester, a foul lout  
Whom the Court loved for graceless arts;  
Sworn scholiast of the bestial parts  
Of speech; a ribald mouth to shout  
In Folly's horny tympanum  
Such things as make the wise man dumb.  
Much loved, him Dante loathed."

The friendly fools of Shakspeare's making were sworn to the service of gentle ladies and courteous lords and an out-cast king: love, in their folly, prevails over the defilements that clog the overblown spirit of Rabelais, and bring dissonance into delightsomeness.

Lear's fool alone suffers himself to be drawn at length. His brethren, for all their grace or interest, are too slight for more than the merest sketching in outline. The prominence given to "the sweet and bitter fool" is his clear due as an actor in the most dreadful and holy drama of the world: a tragedy where the highest, wildest, and lowest passions of heavenly and earthly and hellish spirits are created in substance of flesh and blood, making the "act and agony of tears" to be felt in soul and senses.

Before the Fool's coming into view and audience, an affection of goodwill welcomes him: Lear, self-discrowned, but dishonoured past possible conception by unnatural fallings away from filial love and duty, calls, in the growing whirlwind of righteous wrath, for the Fool, and thrice:

"Where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days." He is answered by a knight of his grudging troop (not, in all likelihood, a keen noter of cause and effect in shifting humours, but here, for once, infallible): "Since my young lady's going away into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away." This matter-of-fact mode of speech, in its directness and simplicity, establishes the unseen Fool in all hearts; not least in the hungry and angered heart of Lear. "No more of that; I have noted it well." The broken king has brooded and lingered over the miseries of his love, which are the resolves of his pride. Cordelia is gone. But her father, strong in each warring passion, has noted well the ever-recurring changes of her absence: the Fool's sorrow at the loss of Lear's outcast daughter has bound the two mourners in the bond of a shared desolation.

Through the earlier scenes, embittering preludes to the full storm of passions, the Fool is constant with his biting sallies, strengthening, for all he be but a fool in his folly, the soul of a ruined father and despitefully entreated king. Each riddle upon riddle, each fable upon fable, cleaves to the heart of the matter; and the homely grotesques of phrase, possible to an "all-licensed fool," are so many efforts to bear up the shaken self-trust of his lord and friend. Well writes Coleridge that Shakspeare "brings him into living connection with the pathos of the play." And Lear, with an impressiveness that is heart-breaking, responds to the humours of folly in pity's guise. His "My pretty knave! how dost thou?" "Why, my boy?" "No, lad, teach me,"—these gentle and simple words, caught up amid the terrors of a speech that does well to be angry, are strangely moving. Staunton Kent and devilish Goneril agree to discern a something not altogether the spirit of jesting in this jester: "This is not altogether fool, my lord," and "You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master." And with a sublime foolishness, which is indeed something more than witless folly, he goes with the appeal: "Nuncle Lear, Nuncle Lear,



tarry and take the Fool with thee !” Soon the first flash is struck out of the darkness before the midnight of horror. Regan rejects him ; Goneril has rejected him ; Lear, in the outburst opening with the words “ Oh ! reason not the need,” closes the holy denunciation with words more dreadful than all else : “ O Fool, I shall go mad !” He turns to the merry fellow of his constant companionship, the man of shrewd wit and pleasantries, the jolly fool ; and to him Lear confesses that he must presently become one of the foolish : not as a fond and faithful fool, but, by the agonising compulsion of distraught nature, thrust with blinded soul to the outer darkness : “ O Fool, I shall go mad !”

Hard upon the pathos of this conscious cry comes that revelation of awe in the highest, no more even by Lamb to be extolled than by Salvini to be enacted, when Shakspeare, in the great words of Hugo, "*prend la démence, qu'il partage en trois, et il met en présence trois fous, le bouffon du ciel, fou par métier; Edgar de Gloucester, fou par prudence; le roi, fou par misère.*" Misery, incarnate in the father spurned, the king set at naught, baring his heart to the night and "winter winds, not so unkind as man's ingratitude," and waited upon by Folly, "who labours to outjest his heart-struck injuries." If it savour not of presumption, one would say that in these supreme places Shakspeare has reached a higher iambic music wherewith to clothe a higher imagination than elsewhere at all in his work. To this effect writes Hugo in the historic preface to his *Cromwell*: "*Parfois peut le grotesque, sans discordance, comme dans la scène du roi Lear et de son Fou, mêler sa voix crierde aux plus sublimes, aux plus lugubres, aux plus rêveuses musiques de l'âme.*" And side by side with such deep wonders there is room for such splendour of piteousness as this:—

"*Lear.* My wits begun to turn.  
Come on, my boy: how dost, my boy? art cold?  
I am cold myself. Where is the straw, my fellow?  
The art of our necessities is strange,

That can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel !  
 Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
 That's sorry yet for thee.

*Fool.* He that has and a little tiny wit,— [*singing.*

With hey, ho, the wind and the rain !—

Must make content with his fortunes fit ;

For the rain it raineth every day.

*Lear.* True, my boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.”

The pity and passion of this are soon over for the “*fou par métier.*” Perhaps there have not been spoken words more touching at leaving life than the Fool’s: “I’ll go to bed at noon.” Those among the critics are assuredly in the right who take them thus, as gentle folly’s ending before the time. For Lear’s cry of anguish: “And my poor fool is hanged !” must be a cry over Cordelia, for all the reasons of beauty and circumstance and simplicity. The Fool already is dead, his nature strained to death, heart-broken. And the highest comment has been made upon the Fool when Lear calls upon his daughter, lost and found and lost, by that gentle name, and makes her “*folle par grâce de ciel,*” fool by sweet nature and frailness and world’s usage.

Thus much, but not to disproportion, for the “sweet and bitter fool” whom the Fates made acquainted with tragedy. Nearest to him, yet at a distance, is Touchstone, shrewdly laughing down the forest, fierce-haunted, yet pastoral, of Arden: that Arden of Warwickshire, lions notwithstanding, which had William of Wykeham once to Warden. He, too, follows into exile; and this is the engaging manner of his outset:—

“*Rosalind.* What if we assayed to steal

The clownish Fool out of your father’s court ?

Would he not be a comfort to our travel ?

*Celia.* He’ll go along o’er the wild world with me.

Leave me alone to woo him.”

But, further, for a contrast with that bitter exile :

“Now go we in content,

To liberty, and not to banishment.”

Touchstone is the spirit of laughter at crosses, where sulkiness is the common display: a man who jests with Fortune in her humours, with dry jollity. Far from being a Mark Tapley, that odd creation of the Ben Jonson of novelists, he would succumb to the passions of Lear; but his is the lighter task to beguile a weary way and a venturesome romance, and not to assuage heart-wounds with quips and cranks. Something of the soul of Heine, coarsened and dulled and embruted to fit the mould of a "roguish clown," is in Touchstone. His grotesques concluding a flight of fancy, his merry irreverences, and his fantastic trick of cross-allusion and application, bring to mind the yet incommunicable tears and laughter of the dear poet. Touchstone's transforming view of things, which is his wit, his alternating epigram and sententiousness, make him a rare feast for the dainty and matured melancholy of Jacques, the embittered and humane cynic, the jester's well-bred counterpart. The contrast of these two (one of the uncounted contrasts of temperament and circumstance, in which Shakspeare luxuriates), gives occasion to an anatomy of melancholy in all its phases, most wonderful under the greenwood tree. The meeting of moralist and merryman is conceived in well-meaning malice; the wealth of Shakspeare's humanity, observant and piercing, has spent itself upon this enchanting chance, which makes of the merriment moralising, of the moralising merriment. To the cynic, whose cynicism is one half a conscious predisposition towards epigram and things sardonic, the discovery of a fool i' the forest, a fool by profession, is matter for richest paradox. From the vantage of the jester's license, Jacques would with biting words regenerate "the infected world": Stylites a-snarl. So wildly can the bourgeois Touchstone work upon the forest philosopher. In and out among the scenes of the woodland, Jacques steals with complacent chuckling over the humours of the little world. He will go so far as Master

What ye call't, as give away a wife to his treasured motley fool, for is not Touchstone a right good materialist in marriage ethics, and a casuist of the best, when Corin the shepherd or forester William be the disputant? "Good my lord, like this fellow," is Jacques' formula of introduction to the Duke for Touchstone. To this connoisseur in human kind, motley is a rare specimen, "very swift and sententious," and gifted with many a "dulcet disease" of folly invaluable to the student of humours. He has knowledge of the Seven Paths of Quarrel, and in his brain

"strange places crammed  
With observation, the which he vents  
In mangled form."

In Jacques' phrase, be valediction to "this motley-minded gentleman" and faithful fool. "Is not this a rare fellow, my lord? he's as good as anything, and yet a fool."

Shakspeare's distinction between fool and clown becomes clear when Costard follows Touchstone. His adjective is rather "blunt" than "gentle." The clown is the rural humourist, rough and ready, honest and perverse. He has none of that sweet unreasonableness which makes the jester: he is a logical fallacy incarnate. In Navarre, that inimitable land of braggarts, pedants, peasant wenches, courtly ladies, rustic dignitaries, and princely lovers,—a medley of men and women, one and all a little mad, Shakspeare's young genius wantons and runs riot in rhyme. The artless play is one laugh, broader or more delicate, as it marks the mind of fair lady or rude clown. Costard, with his frankness and naïveté, his audacity and lightness, has charms peculiarly his own. Set off against his mother-wit are Dull and Holofernes: Dr. Goldsmith and Dr. Johnson, as graceless Grub Street once called them, no unfamiliar faces yet; and the chivalrous hidalgo, roistering Don Adriano de Armado, Don Quixote degenerate in the third degree. Moth, "sweet ounce of man's flesh, incony Jew!" promises to grow to the spiritual stature of Touchstone,

being already "a most acute juvenal." Slight and occasional as these characters may seem, it is yet in these that Shakspeare displays the discrimination of knowledge which makes his work, in the high phrase of Keats, a thing real: "such as existences of sun, moon, and stars, and passages of Shakspeare!" Gradations of humour, distinctions of folly, shades of oddity, are with him separate and real. He knows the village wag from the village natural; Hofnarr and valet, bumpkin and wit, live each after his kind. And this play of *Love's Labour's Lost* has this amongst its charms, that it shows so clearly at the outset the young power of the dramatist to realise life in the right way: "image the parts, then execute the whole."

The fool whose wit in *All's Well that Ends Well* flouts and contrasts with the braggadocio of Parolles, though hardly so omnipresent as others of his tribe, contrives to suggest a definite personality. "Shrewd and unhappy" is a shrewd and happy summing-up of his characteristics quaint and pregnant. He is the indulged, it would seem the matured, servant-friend, whose tongue may wag and freely trip in his lady's chamber with never a scolding. But his jests at life constitute him in his place a low-born Jacques. His railleries serve to amuse the fading wits of his mistress, the old Countess; she plays with his fancies and dallies with his impudence. A pleasant picture they make together: the wizened clown, his features puckered to a sour jest, and the stately dame, shaking her sides like Mrs. Quickly at the constant whimsicalities of her dead husband's favourite:

"I play the noble housewife with the time,  
To entertain 't so merrily with a fool."

Enter Feste, the jester of Illyria, so named of tradition. With him Malvolio, whose ill-advised motley is not the right wear; that is only yellow stockings cross-gartered. In this "strange pair of beasts" yet another artful contrast is

intended. The pragmatic "fool of quality" or, at least, of office, divides with his spiritual comforter, Sir Topas, the diverse laurels of folly. This jester is the purest and most perfect household fool, though his jangling is less tempered by an attention to the fortunes of his masters than is the merriment of many amongst his brethren. In him the careful artist is clearly seen. Rabelais is his text-book of fools' lore, and the maxims of Quinapalus his credo. Jacques' characterisation, "motley-minded," is to him "misprision in the highest degree." For "*cucullus non facit monachum* : that's as much as to say, I wear not motley in my brain." To the delectation of Sir Andrew Aguecheek ("many do call him fool"), he will study to tell "of Pigrogromitus and of the Vapians passing the equinoctial of Quenbus," most gracious fooling! and in his mouth Shakspeare puts some of his most musical songs, for the clown "takes pleasure in singing." Art for art is his chosen precept; he tends and cultivates his follies. Of sages, Pythagoras is his elect, and the foes who set him down an ass he prefers to the friends who make of him an ass with praise; for he would fain profit by self-knowledge. In the art, further, of persuading others into double-dealing he excels. The hearty flavour of fun pervades his nature, impudent, fearless, and quick. In him are well shown the relations of wise men and the declared fools; by abandoning the conventions of thought, which do duty for original wisdom, he returns to his mother-wit, and thrives thereon.

Meagre as is this adumbration of Shakspeare's lively fools, it still may serve to bind in one cluster a rare society. Rare, for many reasons: of which the palmary may be the perfect peculiarity and distinction which mark the society of Shaksperian fools. The conception of singular persons whose singularity is at once their brand and privilege, is universal. Mexican Montezuma and Macedonian Philip had each his fool: if Veronian ladies plumed themselves on

monstrous dwarfs, ladies of Queen Anne revelled in black-amoor pages no less. It would seem to be inbred in men that they should delight to witness something removed from the common level of mankind; that an occasional glimpse into the quainter ways and freaks of nature should excite their curious interest, of which interest the form and fashion must vary between higher and lower impulses, between the impulse of human sympathy and the impulse of human curiosity. The history of fools at large shows the latter and lesser in the ascendant. As to a collector a smudge, a blot, a disfigurement invests some cherished Rembrandt etching with a greater value than a rectified after-copy can possess, in this way the sane, safe souls of the majority take pleasure in witnessing eccentric humours or misshapen bodies. The brilliant gibe or biting sally, issuing from the lips of wry-faced folly, achieves an electrical success. Grave companies and corporations have indulged the laughing taste: the Catholic Church had her parodist boy-bishop, Winchester her junior's terminal license to abuse his prefect, Oxford her racy silvern Latinist, the *Terræ Filius*. Fantasticality is the first, uncouthness the second requisite; but everywhere and when the desire has been to rouse and titillate workaday souls with a taste of Yorick's quality.

And most useful is the study of fools well taken in hand, for "in this world there are more fools than men." And George Meredith, our wisest, is at one with Heine in these words: "Our sympathies, one may fancy, will be broader, our critical acumen shrewder, if we accept the thing 'fantastical' as a part of us and worthy of study." The murmured comments of the imperial crowd in *Faust* express the same burden:—

“Zwei Schelme sind's, verstehn sich schon;  
Varr und Phantast, so nah dem Thron;  
Ein mattgesungen, alt Gedicht,  
Der Thor bläst ein, der Weise spricht.”

The fool being thus established on the basis of mediocre minds demanding him, his handling by Shakspeare should be of singular merit, as is the case indeed. That his fool-creatures are alive and capable, has been seen by the sketching of them ; it remains to make clear their distinction from the fools of others.

The tradition of the Elizabethan stage preserved, something as the Italian stage preserves Pulcinello from times anterior to Rome, the figure of demon or devil from the old moralities. As Vice, or Beelzebub, or Apollyon, the buffoon ranted and roared to the accompaniment of broadest farce. The spirit of spectacular enjoyment that in the Middle Ages broke loose in the Feast of Fools and the Feast of the Ass, found its formal channel in the miracle plays and the moralities. In these the high dogmas and histories of the Faith were travestied, now by burlesque, now by would-be solemn performance. Their interest, for our purpose, is centred in the comedian professed. A strange confirmation of the satyr side of human nature is given by the fact that in the Power of Evil, obscene, riotous, grotesque, honest English men and women found their yearly source and well-spring of laughter. Not that deliberate evil lent a horror to noble revolt, nor that pruriency was an element of pleasure ; but, whilst neither Milton nor Petronius would have sympathised, there remains a convulsed idea of moral obliteration in natures thus revelling in scenes from the Walpurgisnacht. In the extreme only is this true ; but tendencies are only in extremes to be estimated.

Having, then, this comic power ready to hand, the Elizabethan dramatist cast about him for its application to life. The stage was no longer a scene for allegory ; the fresh breath of the time cleared off the mists and veils of "economic representations," and left it free for the acting of men and women's lives, crossing and entangling, struggling and working out some end. In comedy and tragedy



alike, *vraisemblance* was the ideal. From the Power of Evil, coarse and rude, sprang the fool. The application of that earlier form to the facts of life resulted in the finding of nature's cracked workmanship in man: unaccountable, malign, tender, or side-splitting. The fool came to light once more. In his admirable study of the fools and clowns of Shakspeare, Mr. Douce has hardly insisted upon the peculiar turn so given to their character. He treats the fool too much as a stage puppet, and without regard for his conception in the poet's brain.

If we look at fools contemporary or subsequent, their point of difference from Shakspeare's fools will prove to be their lesser degree of substance. They are either funny fellows of the stage or distorted natures; Shakspeare's are men of passions, humours and feelings like to, whilst different from, those of other men. Touchstone and Feste cannot be considered lightly, or labelled, each with his humour, as for Ben Jonson's cabinet. It is characteristic of M. Taine that he writes about Shakspeare's fools: "*L'imagination machinale fait les personnages bêtes de Shakspeare.*" If so direct a negative may be affirmed without provincialism, one would deny the dictum wholly. There is nothing mechanical in the ways of Shakspeare's work.

It must be enough to refer merely to the work of others in the same line; a little care soon brings to light the main dissemblances. In Greene's *Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594), take Ralph Simnel, Prince Edward's fool, and Miles, Bacon's poor scholar-servant; in Marlowe's *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1588?), take Ralph, Robin, and the clown; in Marston's *The Malcontent* (1604), take Passarello, the "old cholerick Marshal's" fool: and from Ben Jonson take any of his innumerable wags and jesters; and from Kyd or Tourneur extract what element of folly may lurk in their shadows; and the difference is apparent at once. These lesser fools

and humorists are a "criticism of life," but they live apart, in a region of roistering merriment and prescribed clownishness. The beauty of Sterne and of Heine, unsearchable and suddenly startling, meets us in the human learning of Shakspeare, who knew the world better than any man, not being its designer, has known it. And with the worthy successors of Shakspeare the knowledge indeed remains, but bitterness of some sort has infested it. Davie Gellatley, in the first-born book of the great Shakesperian, Scott; Cino Galli, in the first-born of Mr. Swinburne; Triboulet, in the dreadful work of Hugo, *Le Roi s'amuse*; Dagonet, in Lord Tennyson's *Idylls*; Archie, in Shelley's strong fragment of *King Charles*; the Fool in Michael Field's Elizabethan tragedy out of due time, *Loyalty or Love?*—how melancholy, how piteous are all these! A change has passed over the pleasures and instructive joys of England, which gives to wit the dirge instead of the ditty. In that singular and unapprehended book, *Dagonet the Jester*, the change is told in strong, strange English: how "the sap of the merry greenwood and the life-stream of England's wanton revelry" froze and died with the death of Dagonet, an imagined last lingering jester of the ancient kind:—

"No! those days are gone away,  
And their hours are old and gray,  
And their minutes buried all  
Under the down-trodden pall  
Of the leaves of many years."

Hear a jester's portrayal of jesters:—

"Orage! être bouffon! Orage! être difforme!  
Toujours, cette pensée! et qu'on veille ou qu'on dorme,  
Quand du monde en rêvant vous avez fait le tour,  
Retomber sur ceci: 'Je suis bouffon de cour!'  
Ne vouloir, ne pouvoir, ne devoir et ne faire  
Que rire! . . . . .  
O pauvre fou de cour! c'est un homme après tout!"

Or hear Cromwell, Carlyle's practical humorist :—

“ Qu'il est heureux, ce fou ! Jusque dans White Hall,  
 Il créa autour de lui tout un monde idéal !  
 Il n'a point de sujets, point de trône ; il est libre,  
 Il n'a pas dans le cœur de douloureuse fibre !  
 . . . . . qu'il est heureux !  
 Sa parole est du bruit ; son existence un rêve.  
 Et quand il atteindra la terme où tout s'achève,  
 Cette faux de la mort, dont mal ne se défend,  
 Ne sera qu'un hochet pour ce viellard enfant.”

Or hear Arthur's fool answer Arthur's knight, the one  
 dour, the other forsworn :—

“ Swine ? I have wallowed, I have washed ; the world  
 Is flesh and shadow. I have had my day.  
 The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind  
 Hath fouled me : an I wallowed, then I washed.  
 I have had my day and my philosophies,  
 And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.”

But Launcelot is recreant, and the world bitter, and—

“ I am thy fool,  
 And I shall never make thee smile again.”

Reality, then, and humanity are the notes of Shakspeare's  
 fools. They live, and are not outside, “the kindly race of  
 men.” A poet, than whom none living is truer, seems to  
 put into words their fashioning in the deep mind of  
 Shakspeare :

“ Ramp, tramp, stamp, and confound  
 Fancy with fact ;—the lost secret is found.”

Common life, consecrated, stirs in the world of Shakspeare,  
 and to the fools it is given to lay bare something of the  
 springs of pity and comfort, something of the secret of  
 laughter and cheerfulness. And they do this, not by rant  
 or vulgarity, but by hearts prompting tongues, in weal or  
 woe. They are part of that which Hugo (despite Mr.  
 Morley's disgust) rightly calls “*le sourire idéal*,” the joy  
 of the whole earth.

Triboulet and Dagonet fail us ; Cromwell was wrong ; only the jesters of Shakspeare serve our more jaded and dustier day. In their quaint voices pleads the voice of that Merry England which is more than myth. Not the England alone of morrice-dance and maypole, but an England where sincerity of manners and freshness of thought, amid all the frolics as old as the world, created a belief in the value of simple life. Honesty, courage, friendliness, were the old-world virtues of the inspirers of that generous age : filled with the gravity befitting citizens of the world, some men went their ways like Plutarch's men, but with the gentler graces of their faith, and higher reverence. There was never, in truth, an age so minded in its entirety ; but something there has been in the past, an unnamed influence, which the present misses ; and were Sir Topas of Illyria on earth again, he might be loth to exchange Pythagoras and his foolishness for the subtler wisdom of elaborate despair, and melancholy born of culture.

For, were Sir Topas on earth again, these birthmarks he would find upon his successors, plain to view upon a whole class of workers in literature and philosophers in society. And had he assumed or assimilated to himself the spirit of his new age, he might amuse his learned leisure by tracing out the pedigree of modern melancholy, from the shrewdness of Montaigne and the wise laughter of Rabelais to the tempered causticity of Mr. Arnold and the chastened gravity of Mr. Pater. He would find the degeneracy of his Elizabethan fellows trailing through the mysterious age of the Stuarts, as wit turned to far-fetching and humour to conceit, and a habit of mind gained ground that accepted these. Where once Raleigh wrote the *History of the World*, feeling power and light for the labour, since he had worn his manhood upon the New World seas and the court of Gloriana, now Burton anatomizes melancholy. In his imperfect sight melancholy is a province of human nature, justly asking as careful a consideration as the *Ecclesiastical*

*Polity* itself. It is the age of Hobbes and Herbert, Donne and Crashaw, Norris, Ferrar, and More ; of men whose names and dates may fearlessly be mingled, on the strength of their common bond. That bond is an extravagance of mental habit : a wandering, whether to Christian Talmudism, Catholic Quietism, Anglican Platonism, or Erastian expedience, outside and beyond the strict limits of what is generally wholesome. An atmosphere is about, in which the fool hides his cap and bells, and lurks in the folds of a Geneva gown, or lies ensconced in the lawns of Oxford amid doctors and mitred men. Exclusive gibing is at an end, for folk are grown at once too wise and too foolish, too anxious and too trivial, to enjoy one hearty intellectual laugh at the world. Even Izaak Walton, peacefully angling among the water-meads of Itchen, his mind running on Marlowe's lyric, and no less on the bombast of Du Bartas ; full of love for the venerable and courteous Provost of Eton, and no less for his " dear son " and unworthy son, Cotton ;—even Walton has not escaped scot-free from the infection of oddity. Despite the charm and beauty abundant, the age, as a whole, is warped from the Elizabethan vigour. And Sir Topas, continuing his research into continuity, would skip with a Benedicite over the strange years in which the strained brains of England gave way to madness, and such grim jesting sprang up as might be amongst the warring chivalries of Loyalist and Puritan ; when there sat at last upon the throne, Dictator in all but name, a " gloomy brewer," who played monkey-tricks at Whitehall banquets, and made England honoured through Christendom. Clearly the professional jester was not wanted. But Cromwell died, and Charles the Martyr's son came back to live with a will. The oppressions of war and disorder vanished from the surface of things, and the grievous mental travail and labour from their heart. All the Hudibrastic tendencies in human nature towards what is laughable and pleasantly provoking became delirious, at the reaction from earnest turmoil and

real disturbance to a revel of licence and indifference. But how deep the difference between the land of Illyria and the land of England! between a land where Olivias were mistresses, and Sir Toby and Sir Topas and Sir Andrew were roisterers, and a land where

—“ flared Charles Satyr’s saturnalia  
Of Lely nymphs, who panting sang : ‘ More gold ;  
We yield our beauties freely ; gold, more gold ! ’ ”

Not even “gentle-hearted” Lamb’s apology can sweeten all the wit of Farquhar and Congreve, Etherege and Rochester, Dryden and Vanbrugh. It is rotten wit, with nothing of Helicon or Castaly in it, unredeemed by any pastoral savour of Sicilian grossness. To this wit of recklessness succeeds, as the nation settles down to stable growth, the sterling worth and wit of the *Spectator*, of the *Citizen of the World*, of *Tom Jones* and *Roderick Random* ; succeed, too, the bitter and bestial genius of Swift, the wilful and blinder humour of Sterne. And to these succeed in due course the best-beloved Lamb, and Scott, Byron with *Don Juan*, Thackeray the historian of humourists. And to these latter dead legion succeeds, with flippant novels, ingenious essays, quaint verse, and universal superiority of manners ; and with “beauty and anguish walking hand-in-hand” on every side of literature.

Only by straying thus far from the fools of Shakspeare can their serene supremacy be established without demur. The spirit that conceived them appears on a higher ground, with wider vision, than the spirits of after-craftsmen. If, as Coleridge and Schlegel said, the fools play the part of a Greek chorus, they are the chorus to every form of tragedy and comedy ; meeting life at all turns with answers as tersely convincing as the *sententiae* of Horace and Seneca, and by a great deal wiser. Their collective wisdom is not a reckless laugh, nor a curious fancy, nor a plain man’s mediocre jest ; it is deeper than Addison, stronger than Goldsmith, gentler-mannered than Byron, not less spiritual at heart,

though less in expression, than Thackeray. They lack a store of "sonnets and subtilties;" but their remedies against the evils of a sweet and bitter life are to laugh with love, to be sorrowful with smiles, and to seem ignorant of formal philosophy and the fashions of an exacting world.

## WILLIAM BLAKE

[*The Academy*, Aug. 26, 1893.]

. . . WAS Blake mad? It is a question always with us. Some say, "Hopelessly mad"; others, "Not vulgarly mad," but mad in a superior way, like—well, like St. Paul, and Swedenborg, and Behmen, and St. Theresa, and Tauler, and perhaps Coleridge, and possibly Pascal, and probably Paracelsus. "Blasted with excess of light," he may be, and too full of "that fine madness," common, as Plato knew, to poets: not a man for the strait waistcoat and the padded cell, but certainly touched somewhere, liable to strange delusions, possessed or obsessed by wild fancies and visionary dreams: a victim of his own imagination. If we ask for proof, we are told, first, his life was most eccentric; secondly, his writings are frantic. So firmly is this opinion held by some, that an eminent physician, in all good faith, once published the astounding statement that Blake "became actually insane, and remained in an asylum for thirty years." Most devil's advocates of Blake's insanity are content with the milder view, already indicated. Now, this much is certain: that plain, commonplace, sober men, well acquainted with Blake in ordinary intercourse, saw in him one of themselves; that clever, shrewd, intelligent men thought him odd, but quite rational; and that men of high powers in art and literature, scholars and sages of various schools, unanimously pronounced him sane. The evidence of his contemporaries is great in amount, and unvarying in substance. No one knew Blake, and thought him mad.

So far as Blake's life is concerned, the question resolves itself into one of facts. Do the known facts indicate that Blake was, in FitzGerald's phrase, "quite mad, but of a madness that was really the elements of great genius ill-sorted; in fact, a genius with a screw loose?" Do facts compel us, in Dr. Malkin's indignant phrase, to "pursue and scare a warm and brilliant imagination, with the hue and cry of madness?" An honest study of the facts must lead to this conclusion: that it would be far easier to prove the madness of Shelley or of Lamb, from the recorded facts of their lives, than the madness of Blake. The two or three wild stories, of the "Adam and Eve" sort, have been universally discredited: whilst the general tenour of Blake's life is known to have been prudent, laborious, courteous, gentle, charitable, sober, calm. But he used strange language: he talked of hired villains making attempts upon his life, not to say his wife, also. It is precisely upon such points that Mr. Ellis and Mr. Yeats\* are invaluable. They tell us what Blake habitually meant by such phrases: how "life," to him, was freedom of the spirit in the world of eternal imagination; how any influence depressing, or thwarting, his artistic aims was a murderous influence, destroying the life which he lived not by bread alone, and which consisted not in the multitude of his possessions. They show us that Blake used these terms with precision: how living Reynolds and dead Rubens were to him hirelings and villains alike, meaning that their sense of art was a blighting and wasting and deadening influence. Nothing is singular and isolated in Blake: a violent phrase strikes us, and we find it habitually used by him with one identical precision of meaning from first to last. But the very sign of most madness is the solution of all continuity and consistency in thought: talk to a madman, one of an

\* *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*. Edited with lithographs, and a Memoir and Interpretation by E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats. (London. Quaritch, 1893.)



originally fine intelligence, and you will find him methodical in his madness for an hour, and then incoherently irresponsible and flighty. There is none of this in Blake: no breaking down of the reason, no breaking out into frenzy and incoherence. But the prophetic books, say some: that mass of chaotic, confounded, and confounding nonsense, where splendid poetry alternates with unmanageable rubbish! If that be a true account of them, Blake was mad; but how few readers, from Mr. Swinburne downwards, have been at the pains to master them! Assuredly, I had not; but I have never presumed to call them unintelligible, because I did not understand them. Mr. Ellis and Mr. Yeats have been at these pains; and, all thanks be to them, no one can any longer so speak of the prophetic books. For they have studied them through and through: they have endured the toils of analysis, comparison, investigation; and they have made it clear, they have made it certain, that Blake had one meaning, one purpose, throughout. Take all the seemingly grotesque nomenclature of his enormous myths, Enitharmon, Los, Golgonooza, Bath, Felpham, Oro, Canterbury, Battersea; see how each name is employed throughout the books; compare its meaning here with its meaning there; examine the bearing of one myth upon another, of this narrative with that; you will be forced to acknowledge that these vast stories, vast powers and personifications, "moving about in worlds not realised," are thoroughly consistent and harmonious. You will also see that Blake, exercising his liberty of vision, discerns his actors in various relations and positions: one power will appear under many aspects: but you will never find him inextricably confusing his myths. I only claim that a careful study of Blake's text, and of these commentaries, will show that Blake's prophetic books, if mad, are admirably methodical in their madness; that he was not under the spell of chance dreams and monstrous imageries, turbidly and rhapsodically thrown together as by some

unbalanced faculty. Test the books as you would test the *Iliad*, or *Hamlet*, or *Faust*. Some allowances you must perforce make; but the general result will be a conviction that one great imaginative mind, precise, determinate, consistent, presided over their construction. I do not claim to have mastered them: that demands some years of patient study. I do claim to have applied to them the most prosaic tests, and never to have found them wanting. Ask a novice in Platonic philosophy to collate the various passages of Plato, in which the word "idea" occurs. He will say, with all due diffidence, that he discovers one prominent usage and meaning of the word, together with certain passages in which it appears to vary somewhat, yet not to the overthrow of Plato's general consistency. Just that is my position: no scholar in Blake, I have still tested these commentaries by ordinary methods, and found that, upon the whole, they disclose to me one persistent purpose in Blake's prophetic books. True, I cannot presume to say in a few words what that is. Blake is not Plato or Aristotle, a man whose philosophy is a common possession of many ages, easily sketched, because all can fill up the gaps and interspaces. I can but say that Mr. Ellis and Mr. Yeats seem to me, one out of many readers, to have proved their point, the rational consistency of Blake's conceptions: in fact, that he had a system. When I read in the *Jerusalem*, that "the Faeries lead the Moon along the Valley of Cherubim," I am personally content, in my sloth, to admire the vague beauty of the picture; but I know that Faeries, Moon, Valley, Cherubim, have definite meanings, above or underneath their pictorial charm. Blake's life, Blake's writings, Blake's art of design, have incontestably a single, simple coherence, a perfect unity: he lived, wrote, designed under one inspiration, obedient to one service of the imagination, without extravagance, without absurdity.

But why this symbolism, this apparatus of mystical mythology? Why not say what you have to say in plain

language? Mill and Mr. Spencer use plain language, and yet their conceptions are difficult. What is the profit of this somewhat suspect and perplexing phraseology, this pseudo-systematic machinery? Surely, after all, Blake was a splendid fanatic, an innocent charlatan, half deluding and half deluded? Why not say Space and Time, if you mean them, instead of using crackjaw names of fantastic personages? Mr. Ellis and Mr. Yeats contrive to use fairly lucid English to explain it all: why did not Blake in the first instance?

In reply, we may refer to the chapter upon the "Necessity of Symbolism," perhaps the finest piece of writing in the whole work. It probably escapes many readers and critics, that any wholesale condemnation of Blake applies also to the literatures and writers whom they revere. Most of us, nominally, are some sort of Christians. What of Job, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the Song of Songs, the Apocalypse? Waiving all vexed questions of inspiration, it remains true that the Biblical writers, Israelite and Christian, did not always use plain language: they wrote visions, allegories, parables. The early Christian exegesis was frankly mystical. Moab and Edom and Egypt and Babylon did not mean Moab and Edom and Egypt and Babylon, but the spiritual significance of those names, exemplified in history. In the name of honesty, let us make a clean sweep of all this, if at heart we revolt against it; orthodox, or heretic, or neither, we need not be superstitious. Let us be honest positivists or materialists, and reject all mystical fables, however ancient and venerable. After all, if much of Blake seem ludicrous, undignified, unpoetical, Blake does not stand alone in that, but he is openly modern, a man of his day, not afraid of its terms. Ancient mystics are saved by their antiquity. Sincerely, if Gilead be admissible, why not Gloucester? If Gog and Magog, why not Urizen and Orc? Bibliolatry, and a false reverence for antiquity, have deadened alike our spiritual appreciation and our spiritual humour.

But the whole question, ultimately, is this : are we bound within the limits, and by the bonds, of the five senses? If not, and metaphysics for the most part say No, what is the ruling principle? Blake, like so many others, found it in imagination, the power of the spirit, soul, mind, at their highest. Like any Kantian, he drew distinctions between reason and understanding; like any Coleridgian, between fancy and imagination; and, like any Spinozist, he saw all things *sub specie æternitatis*. The "thing in itself" haunted him; he refused phenomenal facts; he pondered upon the nature of things, as Lucretius calls the universe, and upon by-gone, though not obsolete, systems. "He loved St. Theresa." His students know how much else he loved, how wide and deep was his mystical erudition, his "science of being," his ontology. He found his end in a reaction almost Manichæan against nature, the material world: against nature, he set up art, the power that divines and sees. Like any theologian, he discerned a "fall of man," a severance and division of his powers, a perpetual war: and, in imagination, he saw that royal faculty which interprets to fallen and distracted man the material witness of his natural senses. That is to say, imagination supplies to nature its interpretative symbols. And here we join hands with all poets. For, though we should begin with drawing elementary distinctions between metaphor and simile, and end by reading the history of æsthetics from Plato and Aristotle to Lessing and Hegel, we shall not comprehend the incomprehensible mystery of poetry. Why did Wordsworth fall from the highest altitudes to the deepest depths, utterly unconscious? Why does the quest after rhyme sometimes lead to the highest beauty of thought, the rhyming words mutually charged with spiritual significance, though the poet was ignorant of it? One may read scores of treatises upon poetry, learned, imaginative, from Aristotle to Sidney, from Sidney to Shelley, and remain wholly unenlightened. Blake delighted in the doctrine of corre-

spondences, foolishly attributed to Swedenborg as a discovery, but the most ancient wisdom of the world. It may flippantly be termed saying one thing when you mean another; more truly it means seeing that one thing is the sign and symbol of another. Imagination at work among the common things of human experience, describes and discovers their divine counterparts: the world is the shadow of eternal truth, and imagination their go-between. Though in Blake this doctrine or theory took a special form and feature, systematised itself peculiarly, it is the property of all imaginative writers, each in his degree. Thus, to take a living author, the magnificent *Odes* and *Essays* of Mr. Patmore are largely unintelligible, apart from the doctrine of symbolic correspondences as utilised by a Catholic. Assuredly here is the essence of poetry: the perception of spiritual resemblances. Blake chose to take these resemblances, and to personify them, and to embody or envisage them, and to make them in his prophetic books as real and live as Hector and Helen. He saw significance in the points of the compass; he found nothing common or unclean; he was utterly fearless in applying his doctrine to visible and actual things. To a prosaic man he would talk of the weather or the Ministry, with all imaginable courtesy and practical address; but in himself, at least with his friends, to his wife, he talked of the eternal world of imagination in which he lived, discerning everywhere its types and images in this. Now and again, he burst out telling of that world before company unfit; and strange stories went about how Mr. Blake said the sun was the Greek Apollo and the Devil, but the real sun cried "Holy, holy, holy!" Most of us are content to find adumbrations of eternal truth and absolute being in material things. Blake, greatly daring, dared to proclaim that not the material image, but the eternal thing signified, was the reality. Many men think that Voltaire's and Johnson's jesting refutations of Berkeley are not only

amusing, but adequate : such men will see nothing in Blake. A most imperfect poet, best remembered by the praises of Browning and Rossetti, has these lines :

“ The essence of mind’s being is the stream of thought ;  
 Difference of mind’s being is difference of the stream ;  
 Within this single difference may be brought  
 All countless differences that are or seem.

“ Now thoughts associate in the common mind  
 By outside semblance, or from general wont ;  
 But in the mind of genius, swift as wind  
 All similarly influencing thoughts confront.

“ Though the things thought, in time and space, may lie  
 Wider than India from the Arctic zone ;  
 If they impress one feeling, swift they fly,  
 And in the mind of genius take one throne.”

Garth Wilkinson, in the epilogue to those strange poems, *Improvisations of the Spirit*, writes : “ Writing from an influx which is really out of yourself, or so far within yourself as to amount to the same thing, is either a madness or a religion. I know of no third possibility.” Here is a man, drunk with mysticism, though no mean master in science, confessing the two alternatives ; it is impossible to study Blake, without seeing that his inspiration was religious, spiritual, not fanatical and insane. Further, this perception of spiritual correspondences and analogies has often led to the wildest moral licence. Blake, understood *literatim et verbatim*, is unconventional enough, but never irresponsibly, enthusiastically so. As Mr. Dowden puts it : “ An antinomian tendency is a characteristic common to many mystics : it is rarely that the antinomianism is so pure and childlike, yet so impassioned, as it was in the case of Blake.” Behmen is poetical enough, but exceedingly vague ; Swedenborg is lucid enough, but exceedingly prosaic ; Blake is both poetical and—laboriously studied,—lucid. Take away his nomenclature, his mythical imagery,

and substitute its actual meaning, and he reads like *The Dark Night of the Soul*, by St. John of the Cross, and many another masterpiece of Christian mysticism. We are always hearing that the epic is out of date and impossible. Blake wrote epics, an epic including epics, upon very high matters ; and he has paid the penalty. Had he cast his work into another form, into his excellent and vigorous prose, he would have won applause ; as it is, he recorded the truth, as his literary imagination gave it to him, and the world, the little English world that knows of him, stands aghast. Yet Blake is far more intelligible than Emerson, because far more precise. Precision, said Palmer, was his word. As Arnold maintained against Carlyle, speaking of the Second Part of *Faust*, a fitful, vague adumbration of many things is detestable. Blake knew that "grandeur of ideas is founded upon precision of ideas," and was definite to the verge of absurdity. . . .

A strong and fine character : a man, from first to last, breasting and facing all adversity, contumely, and opposition ; a man living the life of a sage, and dying the death of a saint. Thoroughly to master his works you must learn a partially new language, and a wholly new mythology. Say, if you will, "Life is not long enough," and say no more ; do not, without knowledge, ridicule or attack a great and generous Englishman. Palmer wrote to Mrs. Gilchrist in connection with her husband's *Life of Blake* :

"No bright thoughts have come to me since my boy left us, but animated by reading the MS. *something did strike me*, which may be worthy of consideration—a preface (however short) by Mr. Carlyle. I never saw a *perfect* embodiment of Mr. Carlyle's *ideal of a man in earnest* but in the person of Blake. And if he were to write only thus much, 'This was a good man and true,' thousands would be talking of Blake, who otherwise would not care twopence for fifty Blakes put together."

And Smetham, no prejudiced devotee of Blake, declared :  
 "If a man can see and feel that which makes Blake what

he is, he can see and feel anything." But to write of Blake is as if one had to write of Wordsworth for the first time: what theories of poetry, what imaginative ideas, would one have to discuss! That battle is long over and done: and Blake is a far inferior subject. Great poet, artist, mystic, he was none of these perfectly, none of these quite originally. It is important that his place should be established, but his place is not with the supreme. Coleridge said of the mystics that they "kept alive the heart within the head," that they were to him "a pillar of fire throughout the night, during my wanderings through the wilderness of death." Blake is among the greatest of the mystics; but the greatest mystics have not been amongst the greatest writers. They are a class apart, select, elect, precious, but not perfect artists, and too often either the idols or the playthings of fools. The greatest writers are mystical, not mystics. Pure mysticism, though skilled interpreters, as Mr. Ellis and Mr. Yeats, may make it plain to us, is still too far away to be the staple and substance of common literature.

## SAINT FRANCIS

[*The Academy*, Feb. 25, 1899; *The Daily Chronicle*, Jan. 2, 1901.]

THE Blessed Brother Pacifico was praying before a crucifix: "and when he began to pray, he was lifted up and snatched away into Heaven, whether in the body or out of the body God only knoweth, and saw in Heaven many seats, whereof he saw one higher than the rest, and glorious beyond them all, shining and made fair with every precious stone. And marvelling at the beauty thereof, he began to think within himself whose seat it should be. And straightway he heard a voice saying unto him: 'This seat was the seat of Lucifer, and in his stead shall the humble Francis sit therein.'" . . . *Deposuit potentes de sede: et*



*exaltavit humiles.* "I saw Lucifer, like lightning, fall from Heaven," says one; and in fulness of time another saw the seat, the throne of the ruined archangel, the vacant sphere and palace of his glory, filled by the "poorling" husband of poverty. There is more in this than in Hamlet's conjectures concerning imperial Cæsar's clay and its eventual uses. This is a legend of that faith against which, in its beginnings, a deputation of respectable persons lodged with the authorities the true complaint, that it was "turning the world upside down": turning it, in truth, from Hell to Heaven. And the humble Francis replaces the fallen angel, that lamentable and calamitous Great One: that Prince of Darkness who (let correspondents of a certain journal stomach it as they may) "is a gentleman"; of transcendent ability and literally splendid origin. Here is celestial allopathy: no case of *similia similibus*. Francis had not even the pride of glorying in his insignificance, his despicability, his humility: he loved to show himself, not as the ostentatious and unmistakable ascetic, but as a very natural Christian man.

Dickens, that highly popular but undervalued writer, wrote a sketch called "Tom Tiddler's Ground." It deals with a "gentleman of property" and intelligence, who assumes the part of 'misanthropic hermit, foul and conceited, delighting in his wide local fame in that comfortless and idealist capacity: it riddles him, it exposes him almost naked but for the encrusting dirt, more insanely proud than any clean potentate receiving public plaudits in gorgeous raiment. Such a figure is frequent in all religions: the man whose rags, when seen by others, become to him as cloth of gold, and his unsavouriness as a sweet incense. Francis was natural; no signs of disease upon him; a humorist, good fellow, shrewd man of affairs; kindly, courteous, "clubbable"; and a saint so divinely human that he might have been "the Beloved Disciple." His beautiful simplicity is what strikes and stirs the modern

mind; not, as with our forefathers, his extravagance. Early in the century, one Eustace, a Roman Catholic priest of the old-fashioned English type, wrote a *Classical Tour in Italy*, which Dickens has ridiculed, and which was a favourite with Mr. Pater, from whose own copy we quote. Upon reaching "Assisium," as the classical gentleman calls it, he dwells upon the "founder of an Order more extraordinary perhaps and more numerous, though less useful and less respectable, than that of the Benedictines." Then follow extravagant references to Lycurgus and Cicero, puzzled and deprecatory praises, and the sober conclusion that, "without being his disciples, we may very safely consider him as a great and wonderful personage." Excellent and cautious Mr. Eustace! The present generation may not be more inclined to walk in Franciscan footsteps, but assuredly it feels less perplexity of admiration, less hesitation of sympathy: the age of Thoreau and Walt Whitman and Count Tolstoi can hail in Francis a reformer of life, free from folly and from failure. He has for ever shown the possibilities of spiritual wealth in poverty, of spiritual comfort in suffering, of spiritual greatness in obscurity, of spiritual glory in humility. The genius of Mr. Shorthouse once created a Duke who said: "My son is a far greater noble than I could ever be; his mother was one of Nature's peeresses." If this sort of metaphor is to be allowed, we know not what dignity, by right divine of nature, did not belong to Francis: the coarse-clad, bare-foot, half-starved *poverello* was "one of Nature's" Popes and Emperors, an hierarch and monarch among men; worthy to be, in the supernatural order, the counterpoise and contrast to the fallen Son of the Morning.

Readers of Mr. Barrie's touching tales of lowly Scottish life must often be disturbed, distressed, by a kind of innocent snobbishness apparent in natures of an exquisite beauty and fine feeling: that reluctance to let your neighbour know the truth about your condition and circumstance,

though there be no shame nor discredit in them, which is a passion even in the sweet-souled Jess. One wonders what Francis would have thought of Thrums: of Jess and Leebie "preparing to receive company," and acting several lies so as to seem more socially considerable and genteel than they are, or have any need to be. It is venial, but ugly, this shame when there is no cause for shame. The spirit of Francis pours ridicule upon those dingy sides of life, and not alone in Thrums, but in all the bustling Babylons of the world. Thanks to "our Lady Poverty," Francis was never worried; he was often anguished, but of worry, word and thing, he did not know the meaning. His self-reproach, his solicitude for others, his hungerings of soul, his burden of desire, are visible and vocal in Brother Leo's plain *Legend*; but the world never troubled him. He sang his way through it with an urgent gaiety and blitheness, loving it, but caring not a jot for its standards of opinion; he "kept sadness to himself and God only," showing to the world a decent joyousness, an unclouded countenance, a serene carriage, a princely ease and graciousness of mien. So he had none but noble cares: most of our cares are ignoble. He did what Turgenev's young Russian idealists long to do, what Brook Farmers and the like in America have tried to do: he "simplified" himself. But it was thanks to no theory; he did not artificially cast off artificiality. Accepting, without questionings, the second nature of Christian grace, he became not less, nor more, than man, but natural man with a divine difference. The "seraphic saint," to put it boldly and frankly, is just one of ourselves without our selfishness, our insane and vexing absorption in ourselves.

"This is the happy warrior: this is he  
Whom every man-at-arms would wish to be."

. . . . . The author of *Stephen Remarx* has written of Francis from the High Church Anglican point of view, and in particular as one profoundly interested in ideals of communal

life in the Church of England. How shall the spirit of Assisi be brought to bear upon Whitechapel or upon our stagnant village life? How shall a staid and decorous Established Church "recapture that first fine careless rapture," that "lyric love" of Francis and his carolling brethren, God's merry men? How, avoiding a forced, unnatural mediævalism, to make the mediæval spirit a power upon our modern day? It is with a not unkindly smile that we think of aproned and gaitered dignitaries upon Church Congress platforms listening, with mild and moderate approbation, to the discussion of such matters, "gas and gaiters" being most of the result. There are two hundred and six entries in the Library Catalogue of the British Museum under the heading of "Francis (Bernadoni), of Assisi, Saint;" but these are questions too hard for them to answer. Imagine a committee sitting to ascertain how the "average sensual man" may become a poet! The Wind of the Spirit, blowing where it listeth, made Francis saint; the Fire of the Spirit chose to flame in his heart; Seraphic Love elected to inhabit there. "This sort cometh not" but by the gift and grace of immediate genius, incalculating, simple and intuitive; it cannot come of planning, of studying and pondering, of wishes father to the thought. It is indisputably true that the religious life, in the technical ecclesiastical sense of that term, has scant attractions for Protestant Englishmen; that, for example, the revival of monasticism has been the least successful feature of the Oxford Movement. An inevitable aspect of artificiality marks the attempts at such revival; it seems hopelessly, self-consciously archaic, imitative, unspontaneous. If it pleases a man to call his establishment "Ye Olde Bunne Shoppe," he may; but himself and his establishment still remain in an age which does not spell in that fashion. Mr. Adderley evinces a vivid consciousness of the futility of aping an irrecoverable past: *cucullus non facit monachum*, and the Franciscan cord does not make a friar. Vocation is a terribly real fact, and its

counterfeit a disastrous possibility. The absolute abnegation of self admits no compromise; the complete renunciation of self-will allows no reservations:—

“The holy Father once commanded a disobedient religious to be stripped of his garments, placed in a deep pit, and covered with earth. When the brethren were fulfilling this order, and only the head of the offender remained uncovered, the compassionate Father drew near and said: ‘Art thou dead, brother? Art thou dead?’ The disobedient friar, now penitent, replied: ‘Yes, Father, I am now indeed dead.’ ‘Rise, then,’ said the saint, ‘if thou art truly dead, and henceforth obey the command of thy Superior as thou oughtest, and show no repugnance to anything he enjoins, any more than a corpse would do. I wish my followers to be dead, not living.’”

What Francis preached he practised. The “foolishness of the saints,” if you will; and yet, a Francis sang:—

“O Love! how can I be  
Afraid of foolishness,  
If through it I possess  
And am possessed by thee?”

It is to be remembered that to find ecstasy in suffering, happiness in poverty, for love of God and of God’s creatures, was nothing extraordinary to Francis, but the purest common sense; he was no dark fanatic. Excessive asceticism he held worse than none at all. “Let the brothers,” he commands, “ever avoid appearing gloomy, sad, and clouded, like the hypocrites; but let them ever be found joyous in the Lord, gay, amiable, gracious, as is meet.” He who sang: “Blessed be God for our sister, the death of the body,” enjoyed life with a passion unsurpassed. Never has the glory of the supernatural descended upon a man more natural.

Mr. Stevenson observes that the dramatist, ecclesiastic, commander resolves, when perplexed, to do what Shakespeare, St. Paul, Cæsar would in like case respectively have done, the sole slight difficulty lying in the question, What is that? And it is anything but easy to say what Francis would do to-day were he in our living England, to win over into the

ranks of righteousness the hooligan, the sweater, the dipsomaniac, the prostitute, the careless rich, and the out-cast poor. One thing he would assuredly do: he would work under authority, never dreaming of indifference to hierarchical order and dogmatic faith. Had Francis been fated to deal with such a Pontiff as Savonarola was fated to confront, it might have broken even his indomitable and joyous heart; but he would never in binding matters have rebelled. The luxuries and laxities of the Roman court under Leo X. would have grieved him sore, but would never have made of him a Luther. Macaulay, in the most purple-patched of his essays, lays his finger upon the truth when he says that Rome has a genius for controlling and utilising her enthusiasts, and that the Anglican Establishment has not. As Private Mulvaney puts it, Rome is remarkably "regimental" in her methods, and even Rome knows well how corporate pride and other causes can imperil, among the religious orders, the virtue of obedience to authority. The founder of the Salvation Army, in his introduction to a delightful little work upon St. Francis by Miss Eileen Douglas, "staff captain" (published in a series bearing the uncomfortable title of "The Red-Hot Library"), trusts that the difference between the Salvationist and the Franciscan spirit is "very slight, although the manifestations of it are widely diverse." In one respect at least, insistence upon obedience, General Booth pays his tribute to the genius of ecclesiastical Rome.

*Ante obitum mortuus, post obitum vivus*, says the epitaph of the Saint. His spirit lives wherever men and women have learned that perfect suffering, for sake of love human and divine, is perfect joy; that renunciation is enrichment. The poorling of Assisi therein made no new discovery; but genius went hand in hand in him with grace to make that truth a music never ceasing, a fire unquenchable. . . .

His story is one of those elect works to be read, as Thomas à Kempis has it, *in angulo*, to the soul's comfort and delight;

it belongs to the true faery or folk-lore of the saints, and has an intense individual beauty. It takes us to that Umbrian countryside which the footprints of Francis and his brethren have left to us for an Holy Land; to the hills and valleys, woods and streams, where the music of our saint is singing, and bird and beast obey him lovingly, and the light of our "Brother Sun" seems purer than elsewhere. It is the land of him who so loved the loveliness of water, that "whenever he did wash his hands, he would make choice of such a place, as that the water which fell should not be trodden by his feet"; who paid loving reverence to the trees and flowers; whose heart went out towards every living thing; who felt earth and air, and water and fire, to be tremulous and overflowing with the beauty of their witness to the beauty and the love of God; whose holy and rejoicing humility raised him to the expectant seat of Lucifer in the unwintering and everlasting Paradise.

## THE "HARDNESS" OF DANTE

[*The Speaker*, Aug. 25, 1894.]

LORD CHESTERFIELD, in the middle year of the eighteenth century, wrote thus to his son:—"My dear Friend, You have by this time, I hope and believe, made such a progress in the Italian language, that you can read it with ease: I mean the easy books in it: and indeed, in that, as well as in every other language, the easiest books are generally the best; for whatever author is obscure and difficult in his own language, certainly does not think clearly. This is, in my opinion, the case of a celebrated Italian author, to whom the Italians, from the admiration they have of him, have given the epithet of *il divino*: I mean Dante. Though I formerly knew Italian extremely well, I could never understand him: for which reason I had done with him, fully convinced that he was not worth the pains necessary

to understand him." A beautiful picture : Chesterfield rebukes Dante for obscure and sophisticated thinking. A few years later, a young Cambridge undergraduate, in the course of a polite and cultured conversation, modestly struck in with an illustration from Dante. A silent and retiring gentleman suddenly turned to him :—" Right ; but have you read Dante, sir ? " " I have endeavoured to understand him." Whereupon the two conversed together for the rest of that evening, and the elder invited the younger to his rooms in Pembroke. They were Gray and his young disciple Nicholls. These two little passages throw light upon each other. "*Sa réputation,*" said impudent Voltaire, "*s'affermira toujours, parcequ'on ne le lit guère.*" On the contrary, Dante's fame, since Gray's day, has waxed great and greater, because his readers have been, like Gray, not wholly unworthy of him. Mazzini, Lamennais, Carlyle, Mr. Ruskin, among the prophets ; Shelley, Byron, Hugo, Tennyson, the Brownings, Rossetti, Arnold, among the poets ; critics, from Landor, Leigh Hunt, Arthur Hallam, to Church, Symonds, Mr. Pater ; the most familiar of American writers, Longfellow, Lowell, Mr. Norton ; scholars of devoted labour, Scartazzini and Witte ; theologians and politicians, Catholics and red-republicans, a great crowd of worshippers, have united to serve him. Translations of him are becoming annual products ; and consciences, whether Anglican or Nonconformist, are eagerly adapting the mighty Catholic to their spiritual wants. And, with all this enthusiasm, Chesterfield was partly right : Dante will always be the hardest poet in the world, not excepting Æschylus, Pindar, Lucretius, Shakespeare, Milton, Browning. But Chesterfield was precisely wrong in his account of Dante's hardness.

Some poets are hard because they are vague ; some because they are impersonal ; some for want of an adequate vocabulary ; others " have hardness thrust upon them " from mere lapse of time. Dante is in none of these



cases. For lack of local knowledge, we shall never be quite able to follow Pindar throughout his work with absolute knowledge; and Shakespeare will always be to us something of a Hamlet. But Dante's hardness yields to patient study: like a mathematical demonstration, he brings us *intelligibilia*, if we will bring sufficient *intellectus*. Hard he is, not obscure, as Coleridge luminously said of Persius. Necessary, for a competent understanding of Dante, are these chief things: a knowledge of mediæval theology and philosophy; of mediæval science, astronomical, chronological, cosmographical; of mediæval history at large; of the Papacy, the Empire, and Florence in particular; of the Italian language in general, and the Tuscan in especial, from early times up to the present; of mediæval classical scholarship; of Dante's mediæval *origines*; of his early commentators and biographers; of Italian topography and archæology; of contemporary art. Add to this modest list the necessity of being somewhat a poet and in no wise a pedant, and the study of Dante will appear sufficiently formidable. But facts are facts; and it is a fact that by far the greater part of Dante's hardness comes, not from his own want of clear thinking, but from his reader's want of clear knowledge; and also, that the means of acquiring that clear knowledge are almost in every case plentiful. To put it very simply: if you know the *Æneid* of Virgil and the *Summa* of Aquinas, so much the better will you know Dante: that is obvious. But it is not too much to say that till you know these and many other things also, you cannot know Dante. No other poet demands so multifarious a knowledge in his readers. If we know the Attic orators, so much the better, as Mr. Jebb tells us, shall we know Sophocles; but whilst the scholar has a special pleasure in studying Sophocles under that illumination, he will not urge its necessity for all. So, too, is it with Milton, Spenser, Goethe: scholarship enriches our joy in them, but scholarship is not a *sine quâ non* for

their students. But Dante, the man of thought and learning, wrote not a word in wantonness ; no poet can be less read at random, opened anywhere, lazily followed. Milton's magnificent names of classic and romantic places please readers who do not know, or have forgotten, their associations : his learned illusions can charm by the splendour of the mere phrases. It is a disreputable way of reading him, but it is possible : no such thing is possible with Dante. The tense phrase, the brief sentence, the reticent restraint of him, simply baffle and confound the ignorant reader : this scholastic term, that classical instance, refuse to be passed over, or half appreciated. And so, "Dante" commonly means a few famous passages—Francesca, Ugolino, Matilda, Sordello, and a score of lovely descriptive lines : the whole "great argument" is too high for the generality of readers. Too high, or too deep : for, as Coleridge has it, "Dante does not so much elevate your thoughts, as send them down deeper." Like his great lover, Michael Angelo, he has no prettiness, no relaxing of his energy ; and, as Angelo is found by some to crush, oppress, overwhelm by sheer strength, rather than to charm, so it is with Dante. "Anatomical exercises," say they of Angelo ; "scholastic exercises," of Dante. The beauty of both is inseparable from their thought ; their vision of the universe has an universality. They will not go out of their way to dally with chance attractions ; they loved law. With no parade of learning, and with no condescension to ignorance, Dante employed all his powers upon his chosen work ; and its structural unity admitted no extravagance of ornament. For pure strength of conception and steadiness of execution, it stands unexcelled, perhaps unequalled. Other marvels of the Middle Age were gradual growths of generations : Aquinas only, beside Dante, raised as perfect a work upon as vast a scale, "without superfluity, without defect."

. . . A wealth of matters, well-nigh inexhaustible, Dante's work embraces. It is direction and guidance that his

inexperienced followers need most : a Virgil to give, not elaborate disquisitions, but pregnant suggestions. A complete knowledge of all that Dante and his scholars have written would be an encyclopædic education, and the daily labour of a long lifetime ; but between that and complete ignorance lies a happy mean. Modern aids in hand, the reader may venture with Milton, *ad illum Dantem libenter et cupide commissatum ire*. Nowhere do the greatness of the ancient world and of the new so harmonise as in him ; and our age of looser thought and feeling may find in him a wisdom, none the less profitable for being the result of a passionate spirit and a stern logic ; confronting eternal realities faithfully and fearlessly, through a pilgrimage that closed in the *Luce eterna* and the Rose of Paradise.

## LEONARDO DA VINCI

[*The Academy*, Feb. 4, 1899.]

WERE atheism true, Michael Angelo could not have been an artist : certainly not the artist whom generations have called, and shall call, "the divine." For *il divino*, more truly than Spinoza, was "drunk with God." But Leonardo da Vinci is the archimage of art ; in whom was incarnate, royally and greatly, the pride of the spirit of the natural man, superbly lusting after knowledge and lordship over nature, hungry for familiarity with the secrets of her heart : from his youth of strength and beauty to his old age of majesty and awe, he led the wizard life of a candidate, an aspirant to universal science. Upon the external side of facts he is well described by the now too little studied Fuseli :

"Such was the dawn of modern art, when Leonardo da Vinci broke forth with a splendour which distanced former excellence : made up of all the elements that constitute the essence of genius, favoured by

education and circumstances, all eye, all ear, all grasp; painter, poet, sculptor, anatomist, architect, engineer, chemist, machinist, musician, man of science, and sometimes empiric; he laid hold of every beauty in the enchanted circle, but, without exclusive attachment to one, dismissed in her turn each. Fitter to scatter hints than to teach by example, he wasted life, insatiate in experiment."

Or, as Vasari puts it by a quotation from Petrarch, Leonardo's accomplishment was "hindered by his desire": the ever-curious spirit loved more the idea than the realisation of it, the perfect theory than its demonstration, the conscious possession of power than its outward use. To this princely painter the dream of the picture, vivid and immortal before the mind's eye, was dearer than the making it visible to the eyes of men; to execute was less noble than to conceive. And all this, painfully frequent as the attitude of incapable small men, was in his instance the attitude of a golden performer, an imperial executant, whose hands were as masterly as his brain was masterful. Imagine Coleridge, full of magic music and vision, but able to finish "Christabel," if he would, yet not finishing it; imagine him, full of metaphysical and theological theories, but, while able to cast them into permanent and complete form, refraining from the light task; imagine him, opulent, at ease, caressed and courted, able to do in his own way all that he was able to do at all, yet almost disdaining or disliking action. We know that this is an imagining, that Coleridge lost his power of initiative, his self-will: but that imagined Coleridge has much in common with the real Leonardo: Leonardo, to quote the old jest, had an impassioned interest in "everything knowable and certain other things," yet the tale of his achievement, as tested or reckoned by great accomplished work, is as poor in quantity as it is rich, splendidly rich, in quality.

To a Baconian zeal for experiment and practical power over nature, Leonardo added a spirit of mystical phantasy; the man of science was also the mage, the pursuer of mysteries,

the lover of Eleusinian darkness and light. Mr. Swinburne speaks of "that indefinable grace and grave mystery which belong to his slightest and wildest work." An elusive strangeness, almost daunting and fascinating together, is his note: he gave something of it to his master Verrocchio, much of it to his pupil Luini; he broods, he dreams, his patience surprises hidden things; he moves in "worlds not realised" by the common liver.

"Raphaël est baisé par la Grâce à genoux;  
Léonard la contemple et pensif, la devine."

That is Sully-Prudhomme. This is Baudelaire:

"Léonard de Vinci, miroir profond et sombre,  
Ou des anges charmants, avec un doux souris  
Tout chargé de mystère, apparaissent à l'ombre  
Des glaciers et des pins, qui ferment leur pays."

Gautier, describing Baudelaire, says that his lips had the "*sinuosités mobiles, voluptueuses et ironiques*" of the haunting faces that Leonardo loved to paint. M. Huysmans speaks of "*de Vinci dont les troublantes princesses passent dans de mystérieux paysages noirs et bleus.*" Lamb, the enthusiast for Hogarth, was enamoured of Leonardo, as appears in his prose and verse. He writes to Hazlitt:

"O la! your Leonardos of Oxford made my mouth water. I was hurried through the gallery, and they escaped me. What do I say? I was a Goth then, and I should not have noticed them. I had not settled my notions of beauty; I have now for ever: the small head, the long eye—that sort of peering curve—the wicked Italian mischief; the stick-at-nothing, Herodias' daughter kind of grace. You understand me?"

Assuredly Hazlitt understood; and Lamb's informal, dashing phrases express a certain truth about Leonardo not less truly than the elaborate locutions of Mr. Pater, with whom is the last word of æsthetic, as distinct from historical, criticism. A complexity, a secrecy, invests this artist and his art: he is occult, and it is not easy to feel at home with him, to feel sure of his thoughts and tendencies, to realise

the manner of the man. We can follow, with fair certainty, the external splendours of his proud progress through a long life to his death in the embrace, as some assert, of King Francis; among the pomps of the Sforza court at Milan, or in the service of Cæsar Borgia, or in rivalry with Michael Angelo at Florence; but the internal history of the man is dim and veiled. Even the outer history has its conjectured strangenesses: one erudite writer would have us believe that Leonardo visited the East, served the Soldan, and embraced the creed of Islam. We disbelieve it; but how "clouded with a doubt" must be the character of the man about whom it may be plausibly maintained! A votarist of the distinguished and the princely in life, a lover of the choice and rich and rare, a contemner of "the crowd incapable of perfectness," an enthusiast for wisdom and understanding, a man of regal mind and bearing, he has, despite of and because of all that, a very lonely look, as of one "voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone": a man, as a strange poet has said of him,

"with eager eyes, that ever restless gleamed  
Further to find, yet ever further sought."

Taking the famous symbolism of Goethe, we can say of Leonardo that he sought *die Mütter*, and was haughtily disposed toward the shallows of thought and faith. Paganism and Christianity were deeply mingled in the man whose John Baptist points us to the wilderness with the subtle smile of Dionysus alluring to the revel. He would have said with Augustine: "*Res ipsa, quae nunc religio Christiana nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani.*" His imagined epitaph by Platino Piatto makes him say: "*Mirator veterum discipulusque memor, Defuit una mihi symmetria prisca.*" In a profounder sense than the obvious, it is true: he longed for the *symmetria prisca* of the eternal design, for the harmony of the spheres, for the rhythm to which, in light and speed and

beauty, sprang forth the morning of the world; *symmetria brisca* meant more to him than to Mantegna and Signorelli. There is something in him of Goethe: a like aristocracy of mind and person, a like universality of outlook, a like aloofness amid the mass of men, a like insatiable curiosity, a like self-centred passion for art and science, a like lack of provincial patriotism, a like longing for more light, a like absorption in things of the intellect. And he has something in common with Blake: the spiritual pride of vision, the flame of the mind, the devoted labour, the vastness of speculation, the mystic sense, the interior loneliness. He seems to have had that exaltation of feeling which has made many a madman: the feeling of identity with the universe, yet of isolation from it, a feeling half divine and half infernal, an intoxication and a torment. It is hard to think of Leonardo as a happy man: a nympholept of knowledge may escape the pettier cares, but his desire is illimitable and so unsatisfied.

. . . . Biographies set to rest certain points of controversy; but to read them with care is not to receive a new or altered impression of the magnificent and multiform Leonardo; rather to deepen and confirm our traditional view. He abides in his mysterious glory, in the rare royalty of his searching spirit and triumphant hand, the man whose least fragment of work is of incalculable suggestiveness and revelation. "Some men," says the Psalmist, "are so strong that they come to fourscore years": strong of spirit and mind and will and bodily presence, strong in splendour of personality, in reach and aspiration of genius, Leonardo well-nigh fulfilled that span of life. If, at the manor house of Cloux beside Amboise, he died indeed in the arms of King Francis, there were two kings in the chamber of death, and "Messire Leonardo da Vinci" knew himself to be the greater, by so much as the imperishable exceeds the perishing. The thoughts and dreams of Leonardo are in eternity.

## R. L. STEVENSON

[*The Academy*, June 3, 1893.]

THE wandering Scot, patriotic and energetic, pushing his fortunes at the ends of the earth, canny and practical, yet moved always by the memory of his old home, is a familiar figure in the real life of experience and in the imaginary life of literature. Edward Irving, in a passage of much magnificence, extols the Scotch Church for begetting "a national character for industry and enterprise, for every domestic and public virtue, which maketh her children ever an acceptable people in the four quarters of the earth." This is patriotically strong; and Dr. Johnson, with other critics of his time, supply a salutary corrective of equal strength. But two Scotchmen, the immortal Scott and the admired Mr. Stevenson, have done wondrously in endearing Scotland to us. Scott displayed the romance of the great past, and led us into a splendid company of fighters and saints and singers, nobles and beggars and burghers, in old Scotland, old England, and old France: the tragedy and comedy of life in its variety. Burns is for Scotchmen: only they can really know his power; others can and must admire, but without a perfect appreciation. Scott belongs to all the world: romantic revivals abroad, religious revivals at home, have derived much of their inspiration from his benignant and refreshing genius. But Scott's travels were mostly of the mind and the imagination; he seldom left the heather without regret. Mr. Stevenson is a wandering Scot in the literal sense. Thinking of his twenty-five volumes, dated from all parts of the earth, we cannot but praise and thank the courageous spirit of a writer whose wanderings, so often made in search of health, have issued in books of a cheerfulness and zest and zeal, so sane and indomitable and strong. With infinite pains and a minute delicacy of skill, his art, the consolatory companion of his



wanderings, has taken us on an enchanted journey from the rivers and woods of France to the seas and islands of the Pacific. Addison, with unfailing grace and humour, with the serenest and the surest power, has enshrined for us the ways of Queen Anne's London : he touches upon high life and upon low, upon humours of the court and of the coffee-house, upon the critic, the politician, the gallant, the great lady, the honest citizen ;—his pages contain it all, he concentrates in them all that bygone London. Travel, for most men of his kind and taste, meant a decorous ramble round the courts and great cities of Europe : a conscious pursuit of culture at a stately pace. But now, all the round world is known ; we put girdles round the earth in the manner of Puck. *Colonial, imperial, federal*, are words much in the mouths of our politicians, and our men of arts and letters fly from China to Peru, and all manner of nations wrangle together over vast African regions and islands of the Southern Seas. Well, our leisurely Addison would find it a bustling, arduous, complicated theme for art. How shall he portray French peasants and Kanakas, Californians and Chinese, San Francisco and Fontainebleau, Samoa and the Hebrides, yet preserve his sureness of hand, his clearness of sight, his grace and moderation and repose? A man may pitch his tent or sling his hammock wherever he choose in the four continents, or upon the great seas ; catch a little local colour, pick up snatches of native dialect, learn something of national habits and racial ways, and produce his probably unimportant work in its season. Now, as in 1830, to quote the pleasant malice of Merimée, the watchword is ever "*point de salut sans la couleur locale*." When these romances have some charm, it is commonly the charm of strangeness and nothing more : an excellent charm indeed. But that is not enough to hold us captive ; the work has neither "wit enough to keep it sweet," nor "vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction." Said Peacock's Mr. Gall, of landscape gardening :

"I distinguish the picturesque and the beautiful, and I add to them, in the laying out of grounds, a third and distinct character, which I call *unexpectedness*." "Pray, sir," said Mr. Milestone, "by what name do you distinguish this character, when a person walks around the grounds for the second time?"

A story does not live *only* because it treats of Florentines or Red Indians or Russians or Arabs. Art is, of course, independent of time and place: we are equally at home with Clytemnestra and Uncle Toby, Dido and Hester Prynne; we require, and in them we find, the "one touch of nature," the common humanity. But even that is not all; we want to find the artist displaying his human sympathies and knowledge and insight in a special, proper, personal way of his own. We have heard so much of late about the impersonality of art! It is very true; but take two of the most impersonal artists in the world, any great pair of Flauberts, and you will find them dealing with the same things, the same scenes, characters, situations, with infinitely various results; the two men are *two*, and they are *men*. Briefly, any story can please that is written by a man about men and women; that reveals a man, with a definite sense of things, an apprehension of his own, writing about other men of whatever age or race, so as to make men of all ages and races interested in them.

"I never think of poor Leander's fate,  
And how he swam, and how his bride sat late,  
And watched the dreadful dawning of the light,  
But as I would of two that died last night.  
So might they now have lived, and so have died:  
The story's heart to me still beats against its side."

They who fulfil our conditions are classics. Of no living man, and of no lately dead man, can we say that he is classic: simply because the judgment of other ages, and often of other races, has not been passed upon him. But some living men are probationary classics, classics on approval: such is Mr. Stevenson. In him I find a modern

Addison, with the old graces and the old humours. True, he is definitely "romantic": he loves the stir of adventure, the whole business of the whole world: he is an ardent enthusiast for tasting many kinds of life. But he has no fierce, feverish brilliance and rapidity; not like those vague persons who have been called "unattached Christians," he is full of attachment to humanity, and is not satisfied with making hasty, clever, soulless sketches of mankind. Wherever he goes, he learns to know and love the heart, the soul, the true and active nature, of the country and the country men. As Addison with his London folk, so Mr. Stevenson with all the people under heaven known to him: they can never and nowhere be so strange to him, so marvellous or so repulsive, but he will make friends with them, try to read their hearts, and picture them as naturally as the folk of his own Lothians. Addison, Steele, Montaigne, Lamb, Browne, each in his way and measure, was thus friendly with the world. "I am averse," said Browne, "from nothing: my conscience would give me the lye if I should say I absolutely detest or hate any essence but the Devil; or soe at least absolutely abhor anything, but that we might come to Composition." This temper is most commonly shown by your leisurely essayist, your writer of wayward genial disquisitions, your pleasant and generous moralist. Mr. Stevenson has shown it in his various essays, in *Virginibus Puerisque*, in *Memories and Portraits*, in *Men and Books*, in *Across the Plains*; as also in *Travels with a Donkey*, in *An Inland Voyage*, in the *Silverado Squatters*, records of pleasing experiments in residence and travel; as also in *A Child's Garden of Verses*, where the grown man is still a perfect child. This temper prompts and inspires him to handle matters of actual practical concern, political, social, religious, as when he champions the memory of Father Damien, or exposes the calamitous misgovernment of Samoa, or turns the dynamiter into effective ridicule. But in all these examples of his art Mr. Stevenson is largely

his own master, he is to himself "both law and impulse"; for all the niceties of design and style demanded for such books, they leave their composer a wide freedom; novels, romances, stories do not. In these he must sternly suppress and limit many fancies, desires, impulses; there are temptations to overcome, seductions to withstand. In a word, he must reconcile his own personality with the impersonality required by his art; and who will affirm that Mr. Stevenson has not succeeded? He has succeeded very largely by style, by "a fine sense of his words." As Newman puts it:

"while the many use language as they find it, the man of genius uses it indeed, but subjects it withal to his own purposes, and moulds it according to his own peculiarities. . . . We might as well say that one man's shadow is another's as that the style of a really gifted mind can belong to any but himself. It follows him about *as* a shadow. His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal."

The style of Mr. Stevenson, like all good styles, owes much to other good styles: he constantly reminds us of Thoreau, Hazlitt, Browne. But one of its original and pervading elements is an artful mastery and adaptation of a Scotch habit of speech, his own birthright: a mingling of its terms and graces and humours with the less homely and statelier language of literary English. His David Balfour surely speaks for him, saying of the "vulgar" English, "Indeed, I have never grown used to it, nor yet altogether with the English grammar, as perhaps a very critical eye might here and there spy out even in these memoirs." *Kidnapped* is a Scotch book in the Lowland tongue, the speech of old Mackellar; but something indefinably, pleasantly Scotch, a somewhat deliberate sententiousness and slow elaboration, all very delightful, hangs around Mr. Stevenson's every page. This is an age of very individual style: no one could mistake a page of Mr. Meredith, or of Mr. Pater, or of Mr. Hardy; and a page of Mr. Stevenson is no less unmistakable. Whether he describe a coil of

rope, or a bad conscience, or a sword-thrust, his language alone will make the thing his own, apart from any peculiar interest or insight in his position towards it. And so, all the world over, the least familiar things come home to us, and convince us, and charm, because told in a language that all his readers have learned to know and most have learned to love. And with style the whole mind of the writer comes in power upon us; all his attitudes and apprehensions. Beautiful as is *Rosamund Gray*, it is not Lamb: one work of Mr. Stevenson differs from another in merit, but they are all his. Burney asked Johnson, whether he did not think Otway frequently tender. "Sir, he is all tenderness!" So, of Mr. Stevenson shall we say that he is all cordiality, all sympathy, all comprehension? It is hard to find the exact expression for that power of reaching through the externals to the interior of things: of discerning in and by the outward aspects and manners of men their very selves and natures. Mr. Stevenson so wins upon us by his minutely appropriate style, that we cannot fail to see what he would be at: what it is in these peoples and places—Scotch be they, or Samoan, that touches him, rouses his human interest and concern. *Mentem mortalia tangunt*, and not always to tears alone. Mr. Stevenson is full of the movement, the animation of life. With no forced phrases, no calculated recklessness or brutality of speech, he takes us, not into the landscape and setting of men's lives, but into their secret. He writes, to outward view, with no eye but for his own pure personal pleasure: not with an eye to an astonished or shocked or captivated public. By touches of that unique style, he brings the ugliest and coarsest things into the pale of beauty, and gives to all the rough lives and places of the world the consecration, not of a brutal or of a silly sentiment, but of an honest and sincere humanity.

## THE SOUL OF SACRED POETRY

[*The Academy*, July 25, 1896; Dec. 26, 1896. *The Outlook*, July 9, 1898.]

THE first necessity of the "divine" poet is that he should be able to say *Scio cui credidi*, and not betake himself to interrogations of the infinite. Tennyson's "In Memoriam," Browning's "Christmas Eve" and "Easter Day," are finely speculative, but neither mystical nor devotional; sacred poetry is the child of theology, the flower in art of a creed. The creed may be Catholic in Southwell, Crashaw, Newman, Patmore, Mr. de Vere, Mr. Francis Thompson; Anglican in Vaughan, Herbert, Donne, Hawker, Miss Rossetti; Puritan in Milton and Marvell: but behind, beneath, beyond the poetry must be felt the definiteness of faith which is sure of itself, and which wonders, indeed, perhaps questions, but never doubts. A cosmopolitan cannot write patriotic poetry; no more can true sacred poetry proceed from uncertainty about sacred things. Given God and man, with certain distinct relations between them, certain dogmatic facts and truths, then the poet can translate into terms of breathing beauty his personal vision of a universal reality, whether it be with tears or raptures. He has his *ποῦ στῶ*: he is not web-spinning in the void. The matchless master is of course Dante, whose *Paradise* is theology in ecstasy and transports; yet theology firm and rational:—

"Luce intellettuale piena d' amore,  
Amor di vero ben pien di letizia,  
Letizia che trascende ogni dolzore."

The absolute vision of Dante is rare; rarer still his power to express it.

"Views of the unveiled heavens alone forth bring  
Prophets who cannot sing;  
Praise that in chiming numbers will not run:  
At least, from David unto Dante, none,  
And none since him."

So sang Mr. Patmore, himself disproving his assertion : yet it is very largely true. For to most devout singers their faith seems a thing apart and afar from their art : they do not realise its beauty, its appeal to the imagination ; or, if they do, they shrink from utterance. Yet such poets as those I have mentioned are not afraid to let their imaginations dwell upon the mysteries of faith : Trinity, Incarnation, Passion, Pentecost, Assumption, Communion of Saints, Eucharist,—they discern in these their divine and human beauty, their loveliness as facts and truths, not as abstractions vaguely realised, or “articles of belief” without warmth and glow. Mere “spirituality” produces woeful verse, tedious pietism ; a precise faith, ardent at the heart and rich with the blood of life, has produced lyrical glories, poetry of celestial passion, Uranian chaunting. The huge collections of the German hymnologists, Daniel and Mone, show how mediæval sacred poets pressed from an exact theology its essential sweetness : and, for a final word upon the matter, let me refer to a letter by Mr. de Vere, profound and persuasive, upon page 244 of Sir Henry Taylor’s *Correspondence*. It is a poet’s exposition, to a poet, of what is possible in poetry to the “Christianised imagination.”

Sacred poets must feel towards the contents of their creed as lovers towards the separate and single beauties of their mistresses : a personal devotion to each gracious detail, with a comprehension of their place and office in the gracious whole. There must be a reverent familiarity, no less than an awed veiling of the eyes. For this poetry abhors generalities : it will have, to use Coleridge’s word, “distinctities,” and not be afraid to face the details of divine history. Take the Nativity. Here is an hour-old baby, lying, perhaps crying, upon stable litter, in a small Jewish village, at a certain definite date : this wretched baby could abolish time and space, for it is God. Take the Crucifixion. Here is a worn-out man, dying upon a gibbet, amid sneers and

jeers, in the company of two common thieves : this miserable man could make the earth stand still, for He is God. Poets who believe these things, and *see* them through an adoring imagination, will shrink from no intimate expression of intimate emotion : so poets, from the young Jesuit martyr Southwell to Mr. Thompson, have played with a devout audacity upon the theme of the Divine Infancy, or pierced in spirit to the most secret agonies of the Divine Passion. Not shirking the truth, out of a falsely reverent reticence, they stir the imagination to mystical journeyings in heavenly places, by their Franciscan fearlessness and cunning. . . . With Dante's Croatian pilgrim to the Veronica we are wrought upon to cry :

"Signor mio Gesù Cristo, Iddio verace,  
Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?"

Such poetry, instinct with the logic which invests the highest works of imagination, is like the *Summa* of Aquinas with the glory of art upon it ; there is no pious prettiness or platitude, but the august simplicity of truth. And the spirit of it "bloweth where it listeth." The least "cultured" of conventicles, the wildest American camp-meeting, has heard strains of this intimate emotion, which have their moments of true mysticism, rightly apprehended.

There should be courtesy, courtliness, high breeding, in our converse with the King of Kings ; but anything is better than a pompous frigidity, a conventional stiffness, in presence of the royal and eternal Love. Boundless familiarity and boundless awe are well compatible and congruous : they augment each other. Towards Mr. Spencer's Unknown I may feel awe ; with Mr. Harrison's Humanity I may feel familiar ; but Christianity, as a thing of historic facts and superhuman dogmas, affects me in both ways, and I find poetry in all theology, theology in much poetry, whilst neither transgresses upon its neighbour's province. . . . Mr. Wilfrid Ward has told us how, when his famous father averred that man's attitude towards God must necessarily



be one of abjection, a friend replied : " Not abject ! Certainly, it should be deferential, but not abject." A delightful, a characteristic *via media* ! If any man object to the present realism of the best sacred mystical poetry, you will find that, really, he has never realised his own faith ; if he thinks it " indecent " to write intimately of the Divine Infancy, he is one who, had he been a contemporary of the Divine Infant, would have shrunk from acknowledging its divinity. No true devotional poet should be shy of imitating Southwell's

" His chilling cold doth heat require :  
Come, seraphim, in lieu of fire !  
This little ark no cover hath :  
Let cherubs' wings his body swathe.  
Come, Raphael, this babe must eat :  
Provide our little Toby meat."

In truth, here is the " grotesque realism " of faith ; here is no decorous, no discreet respectability of carriage towards divine things : it is the very foolishness and madness of devotion, the mark of saints.

From a homesickness for Heaven, which makes verse quiver and thrill, springs . . . that merry appropriation of the Holy Child, with all the holy hospitalities of Christmas ; that mediæval expression, in good wholesome ways, of the full theological purport of the Incarnation : the true Humanity, the true Divinity, the two Natures in the one Person. At " the first Noël " *claritas Dei circumfulsit* ; the night blossomed into flame beneath the feet of the Heavenly Host : wherefore Christendom has in all times and places rejoiced in a rich warmth of Christmas colour, in a kind of sacramental merriment in carols and anthems like innocent drinking-songs, in hail-fellowship with the world. Has not an old caroller of Kent dared to write this of Christ and His Mother ?

" He did whistle and she did sing, she did sing, she did sing ;  
And all the bells on earth did ring  
A Christmas day in the morning ! "

At no other season does the fatal divorce between sacred and secular seem so meaningless; at no season were it more pardonable to laugh in Church! In other words, it is the children's feast, and our mature seriousness blushes without shame into a simple joy. Saint Teresa, one Christmas, bade a sister sing. The sister was of opinion that to contemplate were more seasonable. She had her desire: she contemplated the walls of her cell, in solitude, for many days! The sacred singers must dare, with the first Franciscans, not only to fall prostrate before their Lord, but to be His "merry men," His carollers and gay minstrels. . . .

Profoundly spiritual, or rather mystical, as is the art of Dante Rossetti, steeped in the beauty, filled with the wonder, of Catholic faith, yet there is not in his poems, nor in his pictures, the intense conviction of a personally experienced belief. Their excellence is that of a creative sympathy. The Church, with her hierarchy of saints, her ritual genius, her richness of appeal was to him, as his work shows him, only an artist: a maker and possessor of the most mysterious beauty in the world. But Miss Rossetti, in her sacred poems, brings together all the elements of art's excellence and of a Christian's faith. Their chief note, their unique interest and delight, is a tenderness in them, a tremulous and wistful beauty of adoration rising and passing, at times, into something like a very joyous adoration of friend by friend. *Sed quid inveni-entibus!* we think. This is more than imagination; it is nothing else than vision. And with this sense of attaining and perceptive faith comes a further sense of absolute reality: Dante, Bunyan, Swedenborg, are not more convincing in their cited circumstance. The Paradisal imageries, crowns, palms, flames, all the "furniture of heaven," become to us in her poetry as real, visible, tangible, as altars upon earth; the golden trumpets and harps, the multitudinous music of the saints and angels, ring through

the triumphing chaunts of her later verse. But it is a lyrical, a momentary power, which touches the heart of mystery, sings it, and falls silent ; not the prolonged utterance of a pilgrim travelling the far-off land. As in the profound interior sympathy, the learned mysticism of the greatest Latin hymns, the succession of her sacred poems becomes a tragedy, lyric upon lyric developing the sweet and bitter theme : the lilies, and the thorns, the incense and the ointment, the tears and the jubilation, the prostrate penitent and the redeemed in glory, all do their part, helping forward the ritual of Christian life, adorning the times and seasons of meditation. There are poems of hers with a homely carolling air about them, in their grace and sweetness, as though they were (*salva reverentia*) the nursery songs of Heaven. There are poems, metrically and imaginatively marvellous, surging and sweeping forward with a splendour of movement to their victorious, their exultant close, as though they were the national hymns of Heaven. And of all, those are the most lovely and divine which remind us of Izaak Walton's words, where he writes concerning Herbert and his poems :

“He seems to rejoyce in the thoughts of that word *Jesus*, and say, that the adding these wordes, *my Master*, to it, and the often repetition of them, seemed to perfume his minde, and leave an orientall fragrancy in his very breath.”

And this [in Miss Rossetti] without any artifice, any forced treatment of ideal feeling : it is as natural in its beauty and its rare effect as the loveliness of the *Fioretti*. In all the simplicity there is the mystically enamoured spirit of true theology, that flaming faith and love of saints. It is a little hard in England to realize that spirit : to see, in its playful grace, its devout familiarity, anything but a quaint irreverence. The severer poems of Miss Rossetti, solemn with the solemnity of “The Four Last Things,” are no less alien from the average English attitude. . . .

That poetry of all kinds is bound by law to be beautiful seems obvious. Yet how many modern writers of religious verse have written beautifully? Their piety paralyses their poetic wits; a dry formality of phrase besets them, a kind of consecrated commonplace. The rich loveliness of the older divine poets is for them a quaintness of conceits, lacking in pure simplicity. They do not write as, for example, a not very notable poet of the seventeenth century wrote upon St. Mary Magdalen:—

“The proud Egyptian Queene her Romane guest  
 (To express her love, in height of state and pleasure)  
 With pearl dissolv'd in gold did feast;  
     Both food and treasure.  
 And now, dear Lorde! thy lover, on the faire  
 And silver tables of thy feet, behold!  
 Pearl in her teares, and in her hair  
     Offers thee gold.”

Surely most beautiful in thought and word; if fantastic, it is the fantasy of saints who cannot think or write of high things with aridity, frigidity, primness, but search out beauty, even of words, as a gift due to God. As time proceeds, the authorities over public worship tend to become tasteless: we have Renaissance ecclesiastics ruining the mediæval hymns, we have Wesleyan divines taking his peculiar merits out of Wesley. A supposed “correctness” of expression in singing of the Alpha and Omega, the Ancient of Days, the One and All from Everlasting, has clipped the wings of the Christian Urania, and reduced her soarings to a Sunday-school jog-trot of trite and sanctioned phrases. It is as though originality in the poetry of faith were a dangerous thing, and sensuous beauty of expression in dwelling upon things celestial and supersensuous to be condemned. This timidity in the matter of beauty proceeds in part from timidity in the matter of imagination.

In this point Dante is the supreme master of sublimity,

who is not afraid to describe the seat of the Eternal Light, the central abyss or sea of Love, with as much minuteness as any earthly place, yet not once failing in the majesty and mystery proper to so august a theme. It is an effort to realise invisible verities both without vagueness and yet with mysteriousness ; and this makes poetry in the highest. The white splendours that there are in Vaughan !

“I saw Eternity the other night,  
Like a great ring of pure and endlesse light,  
All calm, as it was bright ;  
And round about it, Time in hours, days, yeares,  
Driven by the sphæres,  
Like a vast shadow mov'd ; in which the world  
And all her traine were hurl'd.”

Or listen to the divine audacity of Donne :

“At the round earth's imagined corners blow,  
Your trumpets, Angels : and arise, arise  
From death, ye numberless infinities  
Of soules, and to your scattered bodies go !”

It is as colossal in conception as the “Last Judgment” of Michael Angelo : or the lines of the *Dies Iræ* thus passionately rendered by Cradshaw :

“O that fire ! before whose face  
Heaven and earth shall find no place :  
O those eyes ! whose angry light  
Must be the day of that dread night.  
O that trump ! whose blast shall run  
An even round with the circling sun,  
And urge the murmuring graves to bring  
Pale mankind forth to meet his King.”

Lips touched with a live coal from the altar are alone fired to these ecstasies of imagination : the *Dream of Gerontius* was another such example of the imagination raised to the high vision of faith, and “moving about in worlds not realised,” yet in some sort apprehended by a mystical intuition. No mere magniloquence suffices : any

ranter can hit upon a large phrase. It is intensity of vision, like that of the eagle soaring against the sun. But few living poets see greatly and finely in the Uranian sort : for who can write with the God-lit glory of these lines by perhaps the oldest of living English mystics, upon the text "There is no God"?—

"Thou art the atheist of the world, and thou  
Hast earth for star and seal upon thy brow ;  
And ruin is thy garment, and thy head  
The loss of death unto the second dead."

## THE POETS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

[*The Daily Chronicle*, Dec. 27, 1900.]

THE poets of the nineteenth century did well. That, I am convinced, will be the verdict of the centuries to come : also that, while scarcely one of the nations did not shine in respect of poetry, France and England excelled the rest. An age filled with tendencies and interests not commonly accounted poetical, an age of industrialism and exact science, has produced a body of poetry marked by nothing more notably than by its imaginativeness, its æsthetic daring, its limitless dreaming, its technical variety and skill. The nineteenth century has in poetry risen above the mainly placid levels of the eighteenth ; the famous "returns" to nature and romanticism and idealism, which the close of that century saw begun in England, France, and Germany, have remained in undiminished force as the chief springs and motives of poetry. And though it is possible to group the poets of the passing century in schools and lines of succession, it has been an age of intense individuality in art, rich in personalities, and a very various distinction. But two features have been

prominent, both separately, and in conjunction. The poets of the century have been, in the Aristotelian sense, philosophic poets; and they have been cunning craftsmen. It could not with truth be said of the poets of the last century that we turn to them for the deepest expression of its thought; it would be very largely true to say it of our own. It could not be claimed that the poetic craftsmanship of the last century, careful and perfect in its kind as it could be, was rich and various; our own has seen born many an "inventor of harmonies," from whose standard it should be impossible for poetry to recede. A third, but less important, feature of the age in poetry is its multifariousness of range; its dramatic reach, its romantic scope; the names of Hugo and Leconte de Lisle, of Browning and Morris, conjure up a world of imaginative pageantry, vast realms new-found for poetry. It might be urged, without excess of paradox, that for purposes of literary, as also of political survey, the nineteenth century began with the last quarter of the eighteenth. The fame of many nineteenth-century poets was firmly established, or deserved to be, in the eighteenth. Germany of the nineteenth century has produced no poet greater than Goethe, England none greater than Wordsworth. Since their appearance, it may be said of poetry, *Plus ça change plus c'est la même chose*. The deepening of imaginative thought, the emancipation of poetry from outworn conventions, the care for beauty, the lyrical impulse, the wider scope which distinguish the best poetry of the century, came to the birth before the dawn of 1801; the dawn of 1901 bids us look back over many combinations and variations of them, but it opens upon no new birth of poetry, no change in its essentials.

Poetry has been a power during these last hundred years; it has both expressed and excited their vague unrest, their despairs and hopes, their lookings backward and their lookings forward. Fletcher of Saltoun, in his famous saying, probably confined himself to poetry of the simplest

orders, immediately moving ; but the highest poetry of the century, the most intellectual and ideal, has furnished many minds with a kind of religion, and served them as Wordsworth served Mill. It is certainly untrue to say that the poets of the century have in the main written with a "purpose," a 'propagandist, impulse or intention ; but it were equally untrue to say that they have been "idle singers of an empty day." The poetry of the age most remote in seeming from the age's character and aspect, poetry often of an almost antiquarian kind, given over to some resuscitation of paganism, or to some graceful dalliance with the ways and thoughts of a past generation and age, testified in an especial manner to the spirit of the century, so ardent, so troubled, so in need of solace. And there have been poets such, in England, as Mrs. Browning and Clough, and Kingsley and Dobell, whose work has a tense vibration and strain, an almost too faithful echo of the age's aching thoughts and wonders. Though there has been a welcome plenty of poets light and fanciful and playful, the nineteenth century has not been one in which poetry has been an elegant accomplishment, a pretty trifle, a polite amusement. The ærial Shelley would convert the world by his melody, by spiritual reason garbed in beauty. Baudelaire, æsthete of æsthetes, sings sermons ; most poetry of the expiring age rings true to some deep convictions in the hearts and minds of its makers. But so diverse, so variegated have been those spiritual and æsthetic attitudes toward life and art, that it is not possible to trace a methodical development in the history of the age's poets. Common to all of them is a passion for poetry, an immense reverence for it, a profound feeling for its dignity, its capacity, its high rank among the possible expressions of humanity. It may well be that we, children of the nineteenth century, deceive ourselves, and worship what future ages will discard and ignore ; and yet, at heart, we feel secure in our judgment that the nineteenth century is, in



kind, if not in degree, a great poetic age, even as the Periclean and Elizabethan.

If we start from Wordsworth and Hugo, we find them but the first of a goodly poetic line in England and France. Coleridge, Landor, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Arnold, Rossetti, Morris, Patmore :—it is no meagre list of poets gone “where Homer and where Orpheus are,” and where a host of admirable lesser contemporaries keep them company. France, from Hugo to Verlaine, boasts a line at least equal to the English, and, in Hugo, the chief writer of the century. Almost all its greater poetry has the note of the ideal, of imaginative and speculative passion ; even the poets of whom Gautier is the type, whose aim is to create nothing but a lyric loveliness, have expressed, through poetry, a pronounced view of life, and, in the sensitiveness of their artistic consciences, have attained to something of a “high seriousness.” The century has seen many forms of reaction from the ways of its predecessor, the *sæculum rationalisticum*, and its poetry has been among the foremost. It has taught us to look upon nature with new eyes, found fresh means of escape from materialism, bidden us comprehend the soul of past ages, quickened our insight and research into the soul of man, made both optimism and pessimism more profound, liberated verse from its chains, sung to a larger music in a richer tongue, insisted upon the mystery of things, restored the spirit of romance, extended its provinces upon every side, and helped it to become a spiritual power. The voice of Wordsworth, when “in the spirit,” is as authoritative as the voice of Darwin ; and since his day, to quote Coleridge, poets have learned to “spread the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops.” Even such things as the sombre negations of Leopardi or the bright impieties of

Heine have upon them this recovered freshness and sincerity. And in the depth of passion the poets have excelled: Byron, the least perfect of great poets, taught romantic love from Moscow to Madrid. Even more than music and painting, poetry has been the fine flower of the age's art; and though the world may contain to-day but few poets, or none, of the first rank, there is no sign that poetry is entering upon a period of bankruptcy or decay. Signs of change there are, and the twentieth century may well see "things unattempted yet" in the province of poetry; but such signs are slight.

In nothing has the poetry of the last hundred years shown itself more profusely, even prodigally, fertile than in its interpretation of nature. The great elemental human passions vary little from age to age in their essentials, however widely in their internal circumstances and expressions; it is otherwise with the relations, not of man to man, but of man to nature. Pantheism, dangerous enough as an intellectual faith, has seemed the necessary attitude of the century's poets toward the visible world in all its manifestations: enraptured converse with the *anima mundi*. Our poets have left no silences, no inarticulateness, in nature. "*Arbres de la forêt, vous connaissez mon âme!*" cries Hugo, and almost all his fellow-poets have known like intercourse and friendship, with a various intimacy of feeling felt by scarcely a poet of antiquity, save Virgil and Lucretius. Upon the technical side, the century's poets have been vastly inventive, introducing countless novelties in construction and rhythm; not always without detriment to established laws of their art. The almost universal revulsion from the classic or the academic has produced, in America, for example, that magnificent anomaly, Walt Whitman, and in France a defiance of poetic conventions, beside which the innovations of Romanticists and Parnassians seem timid. Contrasted with the poetry of the last century, for the most part so orderly and unenterprising, the poetry of this is

bewildering in its diversities of matter and form: an "Augustan" age of "correctness" scarcely seems to be at hand, but it may have to come. It would be hard to say what kind of poetry has been most successful during these hundred years of its assiduous cultivation; probably the lyric, if a wide scope of application be extended to the word. It has been an emotional age, full of ferment and agitation, and the "subtle-souled psychologists" of poetry have proved themselves in touch with it. The lyric, the idyll, the swift dramatic study, have been more in favour than works of prolonged elaboration. Such works have certainly not been wanting, but they seem less characteristic of the century, which in this matter has tended more and more toward the conviction of Poe, and inclined to value most highly the verse which is a brief flight of music.

It is noticeable that the lands of the ancient civilisation have still no rivals in the production of great poetry: the British Colonies and the United States can point to no poet of the first order, and to less than a score of eminent merit. In Europe, Scandinavian poetry has won its way to the world's ear, and Ireland has, almost for the first time, added an admirable contribution to the sum of English verse. I do not profess to explain why, of the two countries, Italy and Germany, which have experienced most change in the body politic and the conditions of life at large, Italy has been poetically fertile, while Germany has not. The unification of the German States produced no second *Aufklärung*. But the spirit of art always "moves in a mysterious way, its wonders to perform," and, though essentially rational, is seldom wholly explicable. And for that reason prophecy about the future of poetry is idle, and even criticism about the past must be but an approximation to the truth. As to the present, it is with just pride that England can claim to see the century pass into the past, if with less poetic glory than adorned its birth, yet, in that regard, not unworthily. Italy, with her veteran Carducci

excepted, no other nation, to my imperfect knowledge, can name equals to Mr. Swinburne, Mr. Meredith, Mr. de Vere; none possesses poets of younger generations more promising than ours; in none is the average level of aim and accomplishment higher. One prophecy at least is not rash: poetry may often be in abeyance, but it will never die. Once it was thought that physical science, the pressure of material cares, discovery in its many forms, would prove fatal to poetry: it has not been so. Such influences as these may have made poetry here, have failed to affect it there, have killed it nowhere. "It is dangerous to differ in religion from the saints, in poetry from the poets": even the Gradgrinds of the world, the hard utilitarians, recognise uneasily a sacrosanctitude in poetry, its source in "an ampler ether, a diviner air." The nineteenth century has done homage to poetry: in the case of all its greatest poets, it has been obedient to Dante's words: "*Onorate l'altissimo poeta!*" Consoling, heartening, uplifting, delighting, inspiring, poetry puts forth its powers in a profusion of ways, with a catholic extent of range: though it sing of the most "old, forgotten, far-off things," its beauty has a direct relevance to its day, and provides an escape into the infinite. The poets of the nineteenth century, who have explored all ages, and sung of all things from the Pyramids to the steam-engine, are among its most potent forces. And we may be thankful that the Muse of the dying century has chiefly been the Uranian, a cause of spiritual joy, a teller of the whitest dreams. A troublous age, crowded with eventfulness, has bequeathed to the unborn ages nothing more imperishable and precious than its golden harvest of poetry: in that matter, at least, it may die with a mind at peace.

## RENAN TRULY SHEWN \*

[*The Academy*: Nov. 20, 1897.]

MME. DARMESTETER has already proved in her admirable *Froissart* that her art as a biographer is a rare and distinguished art. In her short volume on Renan she offers us, with delicacy and reticence, a full presentment of a genius so "undulary and diverse" as his. As a rule, the absent quality of the prose of most women writers is charm. They may write brilliantly, they may write profoundly, tenderly, gracefully, cleverly, eloquently. The vast structure of English literature shows us, in feminine work, triumphs in each of these styles. But the elusive, penetrative flavour that wins us with its enchantment, which we define as "charm," is rarely to be found here. Perhaps it is because women are usually more concerned with what they have to say than with the manner in which they shall say it; are too satisfied with the hasty and imperfect telling; too restive and precipitate; too remorselessly the idle victims of their own cleverness and fluency to heed the mellowing influence of slow production. For charm in prose is something infinitely more than a matter of temperament, however large a part this may play in its development. Hence such a book as Mme. Darmesteter's comes with a double claim upon our gratitude. It is interpenetrated with the dignity and sweetness, the mild, bright, classical grace of form and treatment, that Renan himself so loved; and it fulfils to the uttermost the delicate and difficult achievement it sets out to accomplish. . . .

In this biography one hardly knows what to praise most: the large and easy treatment, the delicate reserve, or the subtle distinction of its style. Renan in English, clothed in all his French graces and charms:—this is no ordinary

\* *Renan*. By MME. DARMESTETER (A. Mary F. Robinson). London. Methuen, 1897.

literary achievement. And add to this purely literary triumph the more valuable qualities of veracity, of faithful presentment, of adequate analysis on a broad and sympathetic basis, and you have a work whose solid worth is at least as great as the measured and musical beauty of its form. . . . We have here the whole Renan, a glint of each facet of his variable genius, set in a frame admirably suited to so fascinating a subject ; and if the setter's hand be that of a friend, the reader gains by a suggestive and subtle sympathy.

Take the pages with which this distinguished work opens ; and you will meet the truth about the poetic and unsatisfactory Celt and his rain-deluged, misted corners of the earth. How vividly, if quietly, Mme. Darmesteter interprets both land and race !—

“Remember not only the gaunt and solitary aspect of the place, but the kind of persons who dwell in these small grey cities, at once so damp and so scantily foliaged under the incessant droppings of the uncertain heaven. There is a great indifference to worldly things. And the dreamer (we may count him as ten per cent. of the population) be he poet, saint, beggar, or merely drunkard,—is capable of a pure detachment from material interests which no Buddhist sage could surpass. There is a vibrating ‘other worldliness’ in the air ; the gift of prayer is constant, religious eloquence the brightest privilege, and religious fervour a commonplace. Yet, all round, in the high places and the country holy wells, Mab and Merlin, the fairies and the witches, keep their devotees. And over all the grey, veiled, melancholy distinction which first strikes us as the note of such a place, there is the special poetic Celtic quality, the almost immaterial beauty which has so lingering a charm.”

And again, of the people among whom Renan was born :

“The Breton race, apparently so severe, is one of the most pleasure-loving, and one of the most garrulous in France : a very storehouse of myth and legend, of song and story, of jest and gibe. These melancholy men and maids, visible emblems of renunciation, are capable of mirth and wit and passion. Fond of their glass, quick to repartee, they glory in the gift of the gab, but only when the door is shut on strangers. The extraordinary strength of idealism, the infinite delicacy of sentiment, which form the inmost quintessence of the Celt, impose on him

an image of seemliness, a pure decorum, to which he incessantly conforms the old Adam rebellious in his heart. Reserve and passion, prudence and poetry, are equally inherent in him. The very sinner who transgressed most flagrantly at last week's wake or 'Pardon' will show to-day in every act and every word a serene tranquillity, a justness of thought and phrase which is no more hypocritical than was the passionate fantasy of his falling away."

Mme. Darmesteter concludes this delightful introduction by a paragraph which we must perforce quote :

"Seven hundred years ago the Celtic poets invented a new way of loving. They discovered a sentiment more vague, more tender, than any the Latins or the Germans knew, penetrating to the very source of tears, and at once an infinite aspiration, a mystery, an enigma, a caress. They discovered 'l'amour courtois.' Yesterday their descendant, Ernest Renan, would fain have invented a new way of believing. . . . The 'amour fine' of Launcelot has passed from our books into our hearts ; we feel with a finer shade to-day, because those Celtic harpers lived and sang. I dare not say that Renan has done as much for Faith : that he has transported it far from the perishable world of creeds and dogmas into the undying domains of a pure feeling. But, at least, the attempt was worthy of a Celt and an idealist."

. . . The skill with which the central figure is handled is remarkable. Never was subject more slippery, personality more elusive, in spite of the clear, essential virtues that marked this great modern heretic in the eyes of amazed Christendom. His life, as well as his own lips, designed his epitaph : *Veritatem dilexi* ; and somehow, greatly as we may admire the directness, the disinterestedness of that life, its laboriousness and purity, its high endeavour and stupendous achievement, there remains for us, inexplicably, a point of interrogation in the gentle and gracious irony of its optimism ; a fatal, underlying sense of the fragility of its strength, a doubt of its tolerant sincerity. Is it in the nature of creature so limited as man to be so broad and so charming, so erudite and so indulgent, and still pursue truth as his only end? Truth seems to us, justly or not, composed of harsher and more uncompromising elements. His

biographer is, like himself, so delicately persuasive, that we would fain stifle this question, and not even ask ourselves if the influence and value of work even so luminous as his will last. The secret of his charm Mme. Darmesteter abundantly and conclusively reveals. He possessed almost every virtue man can consistently lay claim to, and death itself found him, honoured and flattered and admired, with words on his dying lips as sage and lofty as any his master, Marcus Aurelius, could have uttered. But still the doubt remains. As a charmer, as the most exquisite writer of French prose, as a man of delicate but commanding and varied genius, he will, of course, endure as long as the civilised world is susceptible to the beauty of a thing so smooth and musical and enchanting as perfect French prose. But as a thinker? a searcher of light? a moral influence and support? This seems less certain. There is too much grace, too much irony, too pervasive and persuasive a charm not to inspire distrust. Even his biographer cannot hide blemishes that partake too pre-eminently of literary qualities not to mark work of a more exalted kind. He remains undoubtedly, as she claims for him, "the greatest man of genius our generation has known." But the weight of his genius is diminished by the dainty spirit of mockery he so consistently reveals. . . . In her criticism of his history of David and Solomon, she condemningly notes his excessive irony and his misplaced "actualities," which give a grotesque air of flippancy to work written with a profound import. And yet, difficult as we may find it to believe that Renan is quite sincere, even when he addresses us in the noblest language, when his whole being reveals itself to us saturated with the moral intoxication of Christian virtue and the beauty of faith (an intoxication consistently fed by the mild austerity of a blameless and beautiful life), we remain willingly captive to his irresistible grace, to the bland and exquisite compulsion of his power. . . . He writes beautifully on all subjects; but no mood of his can ever stifle the



reader's underlying question, even when thoroughly subjugated by him : *Is he serious or not ? Is he laughing in his sleeve ? Am I the subject of an exquisite joke ?* One may be no less alive to the penetrating beauty of his pages, partake not the less in the captivating delight of such a supreme manifestation of the art of beguilement as his, and consciously decline to accept the durability of his influence.

## THOUGHTS ON BACON.

[*The Daily Chronicle*, April 14, 1900.]

. . . BACON'S most splendid achievement in that English tongue which he so greatly despised as an instrument of literature, and the most magnificent fragment of his impossible philosophic dream, is not meat for the multitude ; but the *Essays*, as their author wrote of them, come "home to men's business and bosoms." These fifty-eight pieces, for the most part, to speak in paradox, infinitely brief, are the compressed worldly wisdom of one whom it is impossible to love, difficult to revere, but, in the Latin sense, necessary to "admire." No man, save that loyal fanatic of Bacon's moral character, Mr. Spedding, has ever professed love for "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind." That later, sweeter essayist, Charles Lamb, was called by Thackeray "Saint Charles" ; no one could call the cold, corrupt Lord Chancellor "Saint Francis."

The Bacon of the *Essays* belongs in spirit to that line of Italian publicists and politicians which extends from Machiavelli to Crispi ; his worldly wisdom is a profound, unemotional calculation, set down in sentences of a massy gold. Even when he turns to some theme less liable to human taint than passions and ambitions, even when he expatiates upon gardens and masques and building, it is

still without "a pure natural joy"; the discourses, for all their charm, have something of the State Paper about their terse precision of precept. He may merit all the applauses paid him; we may bow the head in acquiescence when the youthful George Herbert dubs him "Colleague of the Sun"; we may forget that, as his arch-enemy Blake has it, "King James was Bacon's *primum mobile*;" but his inveterate shrewdness, his constant pompous prudence, his solemn looking to the main chance, his knowledge of men without love of them, make him an oppressive companion.

That famous Irishman and convict, John Mitchel, called him an "intellectual chimera;" certainly in his *Essays* he too often appears a moral and spiritual chimera. When he writes of love and friendship, writes of them with a cunning, calm, and cool mediocrity of feeling, it is hard to believe that he was ever in love or had a single friend. And upon less personal and intimate themes, upon statecraft, legislation, judicature, war, he dwells with a monotonous magnificence of common sense, until the reader of his Thucydidean or Tacitean oracles longs for the lovable waywardness of Montaigne, longs to escape from Bacon's workmanlike council chamber to the turret library of Sieur Michel. His permanent appeal in the *Essays* lies in his incomparable strength and weightiness of phrase; it is easy to execrate the meaning or message of his brief meditations, whilst wondering at their superb manner, their haughty reticence and restraint. Rich with classic and historic instances and illustration, teeming and pregnant with undelivered inner meanings, majestic in their disdain of superfluities, the great sentences pass in procession with an air of proud assurance. "Thus thought Francis Bacon!" seems inscribed at the close of every essay. Their gnomic utterances are monumental in their cumulative effect, and wear an aspect of finality; they proceed from a deep pondering, a profound brooding; they are the *visa et cogitata* of one whose mind knows no holiday. Tennyson has transferred

to Bacon Dante's proud praise of Aristotle : "master of those who know."

Aristotle had a loftier knowledge of high things than had Bacon ; but, at least, remembering the boundless promises and prophecies of the *Instauratio Magna*, the *Advancement of Learning*, the *Novum Organon*, we may well call Bacon master of those who desire knowledge. But in the *Essays* we have the experience and convictions, not of one "voyaging through deep seas of thought alone," not of the "master and interpreter of nature," but of the man immersed in affairs, conversant with courts of royalty and law, observant of daily life, attentive to the teachings of the visible world. We are here far from the dethroner of Aristotle and Aquinas, and in the presence of a less pretentious, but much more practical spirit. And the ripe harvest of such experience is to be reaped from the *Essays* : not always a very noble load of doctrine and advice, but always the result of a careful mental culture. The *Essays* are impressive : it seems a weak and simple thing to say, but no other word is equally exact. Bacon is the first English essayist.

Now, we are rightly wont to think of the essay as a somewhat light-mannered, delicate, even whimsical thing ; or, if not quite that, as depending essentially upon grace and charm for its persuasiveness. There is none of this in Bacon ; he is as incapable of jesting as (whatever he may say) was Pilate. His sagacious brevities of meditation and exposition are immeasurably serious. A great artist of our day, unconsciously echoing Reynolds, once declared that he did not ask two hundred guineas for the labour of two days, but "for the knowledge of a lifetime." So, too, each of these brief concentrated essays seems to contain the composition, it may be, of a few days or hours, but is assuredly also the distillation and fine essence of a great vigilant experience. Essays, in the sense of a theme variously and ingeniously played upon and worked out,

they are not ; but they are collections of thoughts compactly knit together, sometimes so tightly as to be elliptical and obscure. They have become popular, but they are not light reading. Hallam, indeed, speaking of books much quoted and at the same time much read, says :—

“In this respect they lead the van of our prose literature ; for no gentleman is ashamed of owning that he has not read the Elizabethan writers ; but it would be somewhat derogatory to a man of the slightest claim to polite letters, were he unacquainted with the *Essays* of Bacon.”

Pithy, pungent, emphatic, couched in a panoply of sonorous phrases, they embody the worldly wisdom of him whom, rightly or wrongly, we have come to regard as the prince of English sages, if not, in the strong words of Pope, “the greatest genius that England (or perhaps any country) ever produced.” In this time of war and of imperial conceptions, it is amusing and good to peruse Bacon upon “*Empire*” and “*The True Greatness of Kingdoms*.” Whatever be our personal views, does it not seem as though the prescient Bacon, in the following words, had foreseen our present controversies ?

“Neither is the opinion of some of the schoolmen to be received that a war cannot justly be made but upon a precedent injury or provocation. For there is no question but a just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given, is a lawful cause for war.”

Such problems, and all matters of subtle contention among states and men, all things concerning the secular tangible world and its social structure, fascinated the penetrating mind of Bacon : he lets fall, or jots down, some royally sententious statement of his thought, and after-ages find it a rich and fruitful saying. Not for any revelation of his own deplorable personality do we study and prize these *Essays*, but because they transmute into a stately dignity of deep speech a world of mundane wisdom, operative to-day ; and interspersed with that, sound organ chords of a diviner kind, wherein Bacon confesses to an adoring ignorance, sublimer than all his knowledge.

No antagonism to Bacon's philosophy, no contempt for his character, can blind us to his literary splendour. Speaking of him in a somewhat different connection, Cardinal Newman has said : "Moral virtue was not the line in which he undertook to instruct men ; and though, as the poet calls him, he were the 'meanest' of mankind, he was so in what may be called his private capacity, and without any prejudice to the theory of induction." *The Advancement of Learning* is partly a great leap in the dark, an inspired profession of faith, partly a parade of arrogance towards the past ; but its style is magisterial and kingly. Such things as the renowned passage upon poetry rival Hooker's panegyric upon law ; and the whole unfinished work is full of sustained and rolling "magnality" of eloquence, most suited to a prophet. In this work we forget that its writer was, as Dean Church has it, "one of the poorest and most ungenerous of characters" ; we feel, with the same fine critic, that "his is a sort of poetical inauguration of science."

And in the *Essays*, whereof the themes range from the august to the trivial, we feel a certain grandeur of imagination, which half consecrates and ennobles the most cynical and time-serving counsels, the least elevated precepts. As Hazlitt says, "his writings have the gravity of prose with the fervour and vividness of poetry." There lies before us a copy of the *Advancement* from the library of Pope, and it reminds us, not for the first time, how a glory of style, be it Elizabethan solemn majesty, or Augustan polished nicety, can cover a multitude of its master's sins. Bacon invested everything with the trappings of nobility, and his voice never falls from its tone of authority and command ; like the incomparably more venerable Milton, he never relaxes the dignity of his self-expression.

Though one be convinced that or this utterance is no worthy truth, yet it is uttered as though from Sinai, with a laconic imperiousness. A hundred sayings of Pascal, poignant with the aching of a mortified humanity, come

nearer, sink deeper, into our hearts; but Pascal is our fellow-suffering brother, Bacon a mighty alien to us, speaking with an unshakable assurance and self-sufficiency. And our last thought of him is Landor's. In an "Imaginary Conversation" between Bacon and Hooker, Bacon makes confession that though he had laboured to bring men to all manner of profitable studies, and had toiled at them himself, yet "one hath almost escaped me; and surely one worth trouble." Asks Hooker: "Pray, my lord, if I am guilty of no indiscretion, what may it be?" Answers Bacon: "Francis Bacon."

## BOSWELL

[*The Academy*, Sept. 18, 1897.]

"I WILL be myself!" cried Boswell on his return from Corsica: the cry is the keynote of his whole life and character. He confesses of himself, as an author (or, to adopt his cherished spelling, "authour"), that "from a certain peculiarly frank, open, and ostentatious disposition which he avows, his history, like that of the old Seigneur Michael de Montaigne, is to be traced in his writings." Elsewhere, in excuse for a flood of irrelevant egotism, he writes: "to pour out all myself as old Montaigne, I wish all this to be known." With Montaigne, Boswell might have declared that, "in favour of the Huguenots, who condemn private confession, I confess myself in public"; or again: "I have no other end in writing than to discover *myself*." Himself, truly; and to discover others, not otherwise than as he discovered himself, with their "warts," as Cromwell said, their eccentricities and asperities, their public fame and their private peculiarity: he would not "make a tiger a cat to please anybody," nor confine himself to "grave Sam, and great Sam, and solemn Sam, and learned Sam." "For," said he, with absolute conviction, "curiosity is the most prevalent of all our passions"; and curiosity, in

more than its limited modern sense. He meant by it an unflagging, incessant, insatiable interest in life, an hatred of dulness and inattention, of waste moments and sluggish hours; a craving to make each act and occupation contribute of its value to his mind or senses; a dramatic instinct of seizing upon the quickest, liveliest, fullest aspect of things; an unconquerable determination to make the most of life, to see and hear and taste and feel, to be unlike "old Mr. Edwards of Pembroke." To this he would sacrifice self-respect, and cast off dignity, and court rebuffs; but he knew what he was doing, and why he did it: he was not Gray's or Macaulay's genius by accident, fool by nature. He let nothing escape him; he must ever be enjoying some emotion or sensation. He "cannot resist the serious pleasure of writing to Mr. Johnson from the tomb of Melancthon. My paper rests upon the tomb of that great and good man." What a picture! Here is another: At the Duke of Argyll's, after his Hebridean adventures, he can

"never forget the impression made upon my fancy by some of the ladies' maids tripping about in neat morning dresses. After seeing for a long time little but rusticity, their lively manner and gay inviting appearance pleased me so much that I thought for a moment I could have been a knight-errant for them."

Abroad, and breaking all his father's express conditions of residence and study, he, Jimmy Boswell, finds "borne in upon him" the words of St. Paul: "I must see Rome." Language is inadequate to deal with that. Again, in disregard of his wife's claims and father's wishes, he wants to go a-gadding up to town, because keeping Easter at St. Paul's is like keeping the Passover at Jerusalem. Assuredly he never kept his Passover with bitter herbs. He tells Rousseau that there are points *où nos âmes sont unies*: he tells Paoli that "with a mind naturally inclined to melancholy and a deep desire of inquiry, I have intensely applied myself to metaphysical researches." He tells

Chatham that his Lordship has "filled many of my best hours with the noble admiration which a disinterested soul can enjoy in the bowers of philosophy. . . . Could your Lordship find time now and then to honour me with a letter?" Always, as he admits, "that favourite subject *myself*;" yet almost heroically so, even when impudently so: an occasional letter from Chatham would be a zest, an excitement, a distinguished pleasure to the youth under thirty, and therefore—he asks for it! It is not mere pure conceit and ill-breeding: it is an invincible vivacity. You can almost see him reckoning up, as it were, on his plump fingers, his eminent acquaintances, the cities and courts that he has visited, his writings and flirtations and experiences in general: they are his treasures and his triumphs. The acquisition of Johnson was but the greatest of them all, his crowning achievement: all his life was devoted to social *coups d'état*. To hear service in an Anglican cathedral; to attend an exceptionally choice murderer to the gallows; to contrive a meeting between Johnson and Wilkes; to sing a comic song of his own composition before Mr. Pitt at a City feast; to pray among the ruins of Iona, and to run away for fear of ghosts; to turn Roman Catholic, and immediately to run away with an actress; each and all of these performances were to him sensational, enlivening, vivid. This versatile little Ulysses of Scotland refused

"To rust unburnished, not to shine in use,  
As though to breathe were life! Life piled on life  
Were all too little."

Bustling, breathless, bragging, he had endless day-dreams and castles in Spain; there was a piteous kind of courage even in his last years of drunkenness and disappointment, when weakness and absurdity grew upon him, and the world thought him a maudlin bore or buffoon. He would not give up the chase after his ambitions, would not rest upon his laurels, upon the fame of his great biography:



he was as full of schemes and projects as when he dared the dangers of Corsica, and talked heroics with Paoli. A very quaint man, a very ludicrous man, but certainly a great man : causes and effects must be commensurable, and the Boswell of *Boswell's Johnson*, that splendid and unique creation, cannot have been no more than a prying, impertinent, besotted, brainless busybody, a meddling, mannerless, self-important little chatterer, with a big note-book and a good memory. Men "don't do such things" as write masterpieces without a master's ability. Certain critics, who see the dissimilarities between a great artist's life and his work, are fond of denying to the artist the merit of his art : it "came by chance," half unconsciously. To that we may apply Johnson's wise and reiterated conviction, so often asserted in subtler forms by Newman, and accepted by all experts in human nature, that there may be good principles without good practice : if that be true in religion, the converse is true in art. Johnson's own grave and stately writings are the work of one, upon his own confession, not quite sane all his life ; Addison, with his pure and lucid prose, was an habitual tippler ; Lamb, that master of fine graces, was to Carlyle a sorry drunkard playing the fool. And Boswell, because of his failings and absurdities, is not to be given the credit of the undoubted work of genius in which he records them ! Illogical injustice could surely no farther go : it is *assomment*. We shall be told that Goldsmith and Steele wrote their exquisite works because they were wild, irresponsible, unmethodical Irishmen, obviously incapable of producing such perfection *proprio motu* and *voluntate sua*. Art is not an Indian juggler's trick of producing fruit and flowers out of empty space ; and as for the critics, who seem to think so of Boswell, *que messieurs les critiques commencent !* It is not so. As a man, according to Johnson and St. Paul, may sincerely hold good principles, yet be unable to "wear them out in practice," as Topham Beauclerk said, so a fine writer may show in his writings a

thousand virtues of proportion, sobriety, tact, good sense, utterly lacking in his conduct. And *curiosity*, Boswell's absorbing passion, is a feature in his life and conduct which *does* go far towards accounting for the excellences of his masterpiece. His instinct of selection, his presentment of choice scenes, his dramatic directness, his infinitely felicitous touch upon trifles, his unrivalled skill in detail, come naturally from a man who cared so supremely for rare and savoursome experiences in life. He does not weary us with descriptions of dull dinners and reports of insipid talk, because he hated such things; he gives us Johnson and the rest in all their lifelike reality, not excluding the odd and the grotesque, because it was just that piquant reality which he loved, sought out, remembered. He gives us information about himself to his own disadvantage, because such personal information, which helps to show the man, he loved to have of others. Johnson "tosses him," turns and rends him, covers him with confusion. What then! It was magnificent, Johnson at his best; and Boswell wants to show Johnson at his best, in all his glory, the Great Man. He relished his own rebuffs and discomfitures; as for his own weaknesses, well, he wants us to see himself also as he was, exceedingly human: no stiff, bloodless, academic person, but Boswell of the tender conscience, the good intentions, and the frequent fall. So we have Boswell the theological, Boswell the bibulous, Boswell the feudal, Boswell the cosmopolitan,—all the Boswells. We miss neither the Boswell who perpetually discussed predestination, nor the Boswell who sometimes *adhæsit pavimento*. But the art of it! Reading Boswell's half-humorous, half-serious apologies or reasons for recording uncouth or ridiculous sayings and doings, his own or others', we cannot deny that he had full right to say of his *Life* what Johnson said of his *Dictionary*: "Sir, I knew very well what I was undertaking, and very well how to do it; and have done it very well."

"What a pedant," wrote Mr. Matthew Arnold, of Cicero, to Mr. John Morley, "is Mommsen, who runs this charming personage down!" What a pedant, one is inclined to say, must he be who shrinks from an honest admiration and affection for Boswell! In many ways a small, an undignified, a preposterous man, but never a mean, idiotic, vulgar man. He knew all the weak and laughable sides of his own character; and that safeguards him. So abject a fool and vain a toady as Macaulay imagines him, could have had no sense of humour, no subtlety of perception, no delicacy of characterisation: still more, he could not have had the friendship of Johnson and the Club. Johnson was the tenderest of mankind, and protected in long-suffering patience many a querulous or unattractive pensioner upon his charity and inmate under his roof; but Johnson enduring, and more, inviting, the companionship of a fool and toady, and that a Scotsman, is unthinkable. Why the world should be so unwilling to take what Thackeray calls "the more kindly and the more profound view" of Boswell's character, is something of a problem. Doubtless, he awakes in us no such ardour of love and reverent compassion and caressing gratitude as Goldsmith and Lamb awoke; but he is very much our genial friend, our admired and inestimable "Bozzy." There is, perhaps, a lurking sense that, despite his title to our gratitude, he is too undignified, too ridiculous. Goldsmith and Lamb, that gentle pair, have something pathetic and tragic in their sufferings or sorrows. Boswell is too "fat and well-liking," too self-satisfied and assertive, too canny and conquering: there is nothing sacred unto tears about him. His failings and distempers are beautiful neither in cause nor in effect: we do not get beyond thinking him a good fellow, and a prodigious able one. Johnson, thanks to Boswell, we cannot but love: Boswell himself is no more than our excellent, shrewd tavern friend or fellow-traveller. We would gladly have been at "Goldy's" death-bed; we hardly think of "Bozzy's." In truth, it is hard to

think of him as dead, as master of the dread secrets which he loved to peer into with Johnson. To us he is still a Londoner, strutting off down Fleet-street toward Johnson's quarters, thinking with anticipatory gusto of their supper at the Mitre, and meditating how best he shall put the Great Man through his paces. There, in the kindly, jovial tavern, *sedet aeternumque sedebit*. St. Dunstan may chime for midnight, but Boswell sits there still over the port or punch, putting questions without end to the hero whose immortality he has doubled and endeared to us.

## MR. HARDY'S LATER PROSE AND VERSE

[*The Academy*, Nov. 12, 1898; *The Outlook*, Jan. 28, 1899.]

"ANCIENT outdoor crafts and occupations," writes Mr. Stevenson, "whether Mr. Hardy wields the shepherd's crook or Count Tolstoi swings the scythe, lift romance into a near neighbourhood with epic." It is certainly so that we love to think of Mr. Hardy: not as the arraigner of the universe, greatly angered and distressed by its essential flaws, but as the patient, poetical artist, who portrays the workings of life under certain conditions of nature, society, tradition, dear and familiar to his heart's experience. Modern though he be, and even of an "advanced" modernity, his writings have a primitive savour, a tang of antiquity, an earthy charm, an affinity, a comradeship with nature. Of some among his finest characters we say that we "see men as trees walking." They are literal sons of the soil, children of the Earth-Mother. They are effective with the mysterious effectiveness of nature, and the youngest of them is ancient. The Mr. Hardy of our preference is a writer of impassioned and beautiful solemnity. The Mr. Hardy of our occasional dislike is a writer of querulous questioning and unrest. At times he suggests a man who

should love to read Pascal with a sad dissatisfaction and Schopenhauer with a sick content; at times he writes with a rapture of lovely stoicism, a lyrical strength and ecstasy, in his presentation of human life. He is not to be taken, as many take him, for a mere painter of country life; nor again, as many take him, for a propagandist of social theories and ethical speculations. He is of more rich, profound, and universal a genius: in other words, a great writer.

But he is among the least sentimental of writers: he can offend and vex us in many ways, but not in that abhorrent way; and his tragedies and comedies and farces are invariably virile, strenuous, full of nerve and vigour. Facile popularity does not follow such a writer; highly intelligent misunderstanding often does. So it is that Mr. Hardy is somewhat of an isolated artist; he demands to be read with faith, with a certain tacit acceptance at the first. He is not versatile, fluent, a man of quick changes and surprises. He abides in art, in the "splendid isolation" of his native Wessex: that corner of the earth *ridet illi præter omnes*, and it is not equally near, dear, and intelligible to all. His books have a certain strangeness to many minds, an aloofness and peculiarity, so that they are suspected of caricature, of wilful eccentricity: they may be true to life, but it is to an unfamiliar aspect and sort of life. The portrayal of Portland in his latest book is a signal instance of this: he gives to the island, or, rather, discerns in it, a "humour" of its very own, in Ben Jonson's sense of the term; it is too fantastical, say some readers. Mr. Hardy has a decided preference for Abana and Pharpar above the general Jordan of the average novelist. This passionately loving knowledge of certain scenes, ways, and people, this exclusive intimacy, a delight in their results to some, are an hindrance to others; such loyalty and fidelity make large demands. And Mr. Hardy's local patriotism is not provincial, no

mere matter of dialect and externality. The passions in his writings are "of the centre," though displayed with those shades of difference, those inevitable *nuances*, which separate not only race from race, but shire from shire. Any failure to feel at home in his environment implies inability to feel the power of his art at all. He is not a difficult, an obscure, writer : he is certainly exacting.

. . . Charlotte Brontë, in some ways among the wisest of women, wrote to an Emersonian friend : "I suppose I have something harsher in my nature than you have, something which every now and then tells me dreary secrets about my race, and I cannot believe the voice of the Optimist, charm he never so wisely." Though Mr. Hardy, like Mr. Browning, lays it down that his poems are "largely dramatic or personative in conception, and this even where they are not obviously so," yet (as in all such cases and pleas), the poet's choice of imaginative theme, his personal interest in his impersonal moods and characters, cannot but largely speak the man. In his poems there are passion, humour, wistfulness, grimness, tenderness, but never joy, the radiant and invincible ; Mr. Hardy's verse is not on speaking terms with that of his colleagues in prose, Mr. Meredith and Mr. Stevenson, children of the sunlight. This verse is bitter-sweet at best, a thing of poignancy and aching and endurance, relieved with laughter not of the jovial kind ; it is most modern and mediæval. Its intensities have a curious value for lovers of plain speech about life, even though its philosophies seem thwart and wrong.<sup>1</sup>

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh : "Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting !"  
Then would I bear, and clench myself, and die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited ;  
Half-cased, too, that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

The spirit of this sonnet is the spirit of the book ; and is surely something more than what Newman calls "just the impatient sensitiveness which relieves itself by a definite delineation of what is so hateful to it" ; it is at least in illustrating the contrarieties, cross chances, vexed attitudes, marred possibilities of existence, that Mr. Hardy's "dramatic or personative" poetic art is most easily at home. A drastic, emphatic, fascinating art ! Yet the reader should always keep in mind one little poem, "The Impercipient," which softens and sweetens the whole : a little poem which strangely recalls to me the one touching thing recorded of Schopenhauer.

Many pieces, as the sonnet quoted, are contemplative, introspective, philosophic, rich in a grave felicity of dolorous phrases and an iron music. Others are novelist's work in verse ; and some of these, as "Her Death, and After," with its subtlety of conception and situation, had been better in Mr. Hardy's prose : they cry out to be cast into short stories by the writer of *Wessex Tales*. But many are perfectly successful in their actual form ; Browning might be proud of "The Burghers;" and "My Cicely," both technically and imaginatively, is a moving masterpiece. "Friends Beyond," a dialogue *d'outré tombe*, is equally haunting ; the old Wessex characters, high and low, speak to us from the deep rest of Mellstock Churchyard, where they lie in death's liberty, fraternity, equality of sleep ; speak "at mothy curfew-tide" of labours ended, the world over and done, its little and its great things alike become vanity, all thoughts of earth lost in the incurious repose of death. This poem, impossible to mutilate by an extract, reaches to

the heart with its music of mortality, its accents of homeliness coming from the inscrutable grave ; it is Lucretius talking Wessex with Old Testament solemnity. . . . But it is not possible to classify the various poems with any definiteness ; all abound in "criticism of life," and death makes a lean and dusty figure in the most of them. We are confronted with the perplexities of soul incident to life in a world "where Nature such dilemmas could devise" ; we are tangled and torn in the thickets of life's malign contrivance, and make our smiling, sad confessions of our strange selfhood.

A thought too strange to house within my brain  
Haunting its outer precincts I discern !

Such psychology meets us here not seldom, and hiddenly permeates even the odd humours of such pieces as "The Slow Nature." Here are no dreamy, mild solutions of dark problems, no condescension to the impulse of pitifulness, no mystical refuges and resignations. We can never know how much of the tragedy of Lamb's life lay in his solitary love, which finds so piercing an expression in his "Dream Children" : "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing ; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been. . . ." It is gently plangent and uncomplaining and resigned. Now hear this, "At a Bridal" :—

When you paced forth, to wait maternity,  
A dream of other offspring held my mind,  
Compounded of us twain as love designed :  
Rare forms, that corporate now will never be !  
Should I, too, wed as slave to Mode's decree,  
And each thus found apart, of false desire,  
A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire  
As had fired ours, could ever have mingled we ;  
And, grieved that lives so matched should miscompose,  
Each mourn the double waste ; and question dare



To the Great Dame whence incarnation flows,  
Why those high-purposed children never were :  
What will she answer ? That she does not care  
If the race all such sovereign types unknowns.

To some such drear "dysangel" most of these brooding, scrutinising pages turn and return : and always with some concrete, positive instance or proof from the dramatic facts of life. But not all the ponderings, as of Milton's fallen angels, upon the constitution of things, upon the sorrow inherent in existence and the mystery compassing it round about, can take from life its impassioned interest : that interest which lives and moves in Mr. Hardy's novels, and which animates his arresting, strenuous, sometimes admirable poems.

. . . In confident defiance of those judges who find in *Tess* and *Jude* Mr. Hardy's masterpieces, by reason of their dealings with social ethics in a "fearless" and latter-day manner, we would assign the place of honour to *The Return of the Native*, and, with no long interval, to *The Woodlanders*, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Life's "large ironies" are in these, its heights and depths of sorrow, joy, love, hate ; the great elemental things of humanity, which are dateless and from everlasting, presented with a noble largeness of handling, and set to superb accompaniments of inanimate nature. Or rather, in these books, Mr. Hardy almost forces our belief in Spinoza's doctrine : *omnia, quamvis diversis gradibus, animata sunt*. There is here no easy pantheism, nor Mr. Ruskin's "pathetic fallacy" : nothing but imagination glorifying experience with an august simplicity of expression ; the woods, the winds, the stars play their inevitable parts, but without the forced unreality of personification. Tragic in the extreme, of an iron sternness, these romances have a splendour of beauty in their stories of endurance and profoundest sorrow : stories of men and women who, "being wrought," were like Othello, "perplexed in the extreme," and bore,

as it were, the whole burden of the world's grief upon them. Rich, shrewd, racy humour encompasses them as with a grim, wise flow of commentary: pastoral Wessex has its say about souls who are suffering the sorrows of Orestes or Antigone, patriarchal woes and trials coeval with the race of man. In these works Mr. Hardy writes an English of strength and purity, with an almost Latin clearness and weight of words, avoiding for the most part the temptation to be too curious a phraseologist, which has sometimes proved too much for him.

Next, for dignity of theme might come *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Far from the Madding Crowd*; and *Under the Greenwood Tree*, that lovable and laughing book, gives us an English Arcady with just a spice of malice. That spice of pleasant malice becomes somewhat unpleasant in certain other stories; even in the audacious tragic-comedy of *Two on a Tower* there shows itself a sort of elvish enjoyment of the "little ironies" in which life abounds. A curious concern for the fantastic, the grotesque, the quaint, marks Mr. Hardy strongly: were he a mediæval builder, his cathedrals would display the richest gargoyles in Christendom. Some of his short stories are eminently successful in a kind of humorous horror or odd melancholy: he is sometimes a Janus, with the face of Democritus on this side, of Heraclitus on that. Had he not been an original writer he might have been an admirable teller of countryside legends and the traditional gossip of centuries. But his greater work, his handling of high things, throws these exercises into the shade: the creator of Marty South and Winterborne, of Yeobright and his mother, of Eustacia, of Henchard, moves with an absolute security upon the higher plane where passions clash and emotions meet, and spirits are finely or fiercely touched.

There is little subtlety, as the word is understood; it were difficult to name a novelist less like Mr. Henry James than is Mr. Hardy. Nor is there any such deliberate

intellectuality as is the strength and the fatal weakness of George Eliot. Yet Mr. Hardy excels in presenting complexities of character and situation, as also in disclosing a philosophy of life. But they are complexities, it is a philosophy, presented or indicated under certain conditions and limitations, most definite, yet not narrowing: he writes out of knowledge and contemplation centred upon the scenes and figures of his predilection, not upon *individua vaga*. Human nature and the rest of nature are his themes, but conditioned, as philosophers say, by certain specialities and proprieties. A man's or woman's love or jealousy is everywhere the same in essence; but whereas, in many books, we could, *mutatis mutandis*, transfer the scene from London to Paris without essential injury, no such translation is possible in the case of Mr. Hardy. Clym Yeobright's passions and emotions might as well exist at Hampstead as upon Egdon: but Egdon is not Hampstead, and Egdon itself is, so to speak, one of the essential characters in the tragic play. Marty South's dumb love might be that of a Lancashire factory girl; but what of the Hintock woods with their voices? And the least happy of Mr. Hardy's creatures are those who are least racy of a distinctive soil, and have, in various degrees, the unmarking mark of cosmopolitanism. Many writers are engaged in showing us the idiosyncrasies of their parish pumps, and the last refinements of their district jargons; but Mr. Hardy, skilled as he is by heart in all the ways of Wessex (though he is, indeed, as Mr. Kipling sings, "Lord of the Wessex coasts and all the lands thereby"), eschews triviality in detail, and goes straight to the heart of his matter, transfusing into it but the spirit, influence, effect of life lived in distinguishing circumstances. His work cares not for futilities of parochialism, but for "high actions and high passions" warring in "a little room," but with no littleness. His best books are solemnizing, and the end is a sense of imperious resignation to the mysteries that beset us. *Tess*

and *Jude* leave us quarrelling either with the universe or with Mr. Hardy. The earlier great books, though in them Mr. Hardy is at no pains to conciliate conventions of thought, leave us, as art ought to leave us, tranquil as at the close of Greek tragedy. When "the act and agony of tears" are overpast, we feel, with Pascal, that man is great because of all things in nature he alone knows his misery, and can feel a solemn triumph in the knowledge. Mr. Hardy's art at its loftiest has the severe beauty of a starry night, the sole thing coupled by Kant, for sublimity of solemnity, with "the moral law."

## CHARLES STEWART PARNELL

[*The Academy*, November 19, 1898.]

ONE epithet occurs with impressive iteration in Mr. O'Brien's quietly enthusiastic *Life of Parnell*:<sup>1</sup> "kingly." Parnell was, still is, "The Chief," by right divine of the genius that rules and leads. Like Cromwell, like Napoleon, he headed his people less as a popular tribune than as a popular tyrant; towards mob and multitude, *as* mob and multitude, he felt the indifference of Coriolanus, the impatience of self-conscious intellect. O'Connell, the one Irishman of the century comparable with him in effectiveness, loved the very physical contact with crowds, whom his voice swayed irresistibly. Parnell, even at his fiercest, and when his audience was friendliest, was alone and aloof, doing his duty and hating it. O'Connell was profuse of his own personality, and took life with an exuberant enjoyment, carrying himself as though every Irishman were his friend and kinsman. Many an Irishman will speak of his two or three words with Parnell as though he were a devout Catholic telling of an audience with the Pope, an honour that may

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell* (1846-1891). By R. Barry O'Brien. (Smith, Elder & Co.) 1898.

come but once in a lifetime. Trusted colleagues, valued allies, respected advisers, tolerated assistants, Parnell had ; but among the whole Irish race they were few indeed who, without shrewd misgivings, could call themselves his friends. *Secretum meum mihi* he seems always to have said ; and he declined to wear either his heart or his brain upon his sleeve. He was "the strong still man" in not "a blatant," but a most loquacious, land ; and his countrymen looked for more fruit from his silences than from the eloquence of others. To his own people he was the Man of Destiny, and, as a consequence, in great measure a Man of Mystery ; but they knew that Ireland filled his life, that his will was of adamant, that England feared him, and that he cared absolutely nothing for England. Ireland found in such a man an acceptable tyrant, worthy of obedience and of confidence ; and she found in him a *new* man. A Protestant landlord of a family not long, as Irishmen estimate such matters, settled in Ireland, and though of honourable repute, by no means "an household word" with Nationalists ; without the agile or fervent imaginativeness of Irish orators, without historical lore or poetical sympathy ; an Irishman who, to his last days, was constantly described by Englishmen as English in ways and manners, the young member for royal Meath in 1875 hardly seemed the man to capture and to captain the national cause, to bring Ireland within sight of self-government, and in less than twenty years to pass to his grave amid the awful, wrathful, and despairing sorrow of his country. Even less, perhaps, did his countrymen foresee that the taciturn young man destined to bring Ireland so close to the goal, was also destined,—in part by his own fault, immeasurably more by the fault of others,—to make the goal unattainable, it may be, for generations. *Quod Deus avertat.*

When Benvenuto Cellini had murdered a man, and Pope Paul III. was preparing to condone the peccadillo, one of his officials remonstrated. Said his Holiness : "You don't

understand these things so well as I. Know that men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, stand above the law." A thoroughly Renaissance sentiment; yet, in a sense, not so entirely antinomian as it sounds. Assuredly Parnell was a Machiavellian, because Machiavellian tactics, in a national cause, seemed to him necessary and "common-sensible": what Thomas Davis or John Martin would have rather died than done, was sometimes to Parnell part of the disagreeable, but inevitable, political order of the day. Among his deepest convictions lay his settled, untheatrical, essential conviction that England, being "the enemy," should be treated as such; that to the House of Commons, in which he sat as, in Attic phrase, "a resident alien," explanations, self-defences, regrets, apologies, could never be due from an Irishman; that his duty was to ignore even what some Irishmen might think the legitimate demands of the House upon one who belonged to it by his own choice and upon no compulsion. But Parnell sat at Westminster, from first to last, as a foreigner; it had no charm for him, no fascination, merely the interest of being the place where he could be most serviceable to Ireland, because most irritating to England. The British Parliament was his strategic field. The strangest, the most romantic figure in that assembly, he was there in superb isolation, directing his followers, but by the force of an iron will, not of intimacy and affection: the "uncrowned king" cared nothing for popularity, even among his immediate courtiers and officials. Mr. Stevenson wrote of him upon a great occasion: "Honour, in this case, is due to Mr. Parnell: he sits before posterity silent, Mr. Forster's appeal echoing down the ages." Yes; silent to England and to English posterity, but in a silence most eloquent to Ireland: the silence of one to whom the opinion of England was irrelevant and valueless, of one to whom English execration or misunderstanding was as nothing, compared with the opportunity of showing Irish enmity and independence. He would negotiate with Tory or with

Whig, accept measures from this government or from that, precisely as his political genius discerned it best; but he would never be fettered by the bonds of an alliance. He dealt with British parties as he dealt with the Clan-na-Gael, honourably, yet with all manner of cunning and dexterity, of diplomatic *finesse*. There was no waste in the man: his speech, his silence, his activity, his inaction, were calculated and full of purpose: they were all part and parcel of his one inveterate aim to serve and save Ireland at any cost or risk to himself, but to do so in his own convinced and determined way. Like Stafford, he was *thorough*; like Pius IX., he knew the power of a brief *non possumus*.

Underneath his personal and intellectual *hauteur*, his nature concealed strange elements: the least modern and "advanced" of Connemara peasants was not more sincerely and passionately superstitious, more profoundly fatalistic. The master of tactics, the man of intuitive decision, of a mind rather scientific than imaginative, kept a watch for omens and portents and presages, no less keenly than for political signs and indications of the times. Probably no one ever knew all that was in his unique nature: his, as an Irish writer has said, was an "ice-clear, ice-cold intellect, working as if in the midst of fire." The tragedy of passion which proved his fall, served but to intensify in men's eyes the intensity of his resolute temperament: the fight of his last days showed the depths of his nature breaking forth and surging up in a storm of fierce emotions. "Once again," he cried to a gathering of his countrymen, "once again I am come to cast myself into the deep sea of the love of my people." What miracles and marvels of self-repression must have been his, who, with this fire of feeling in him, was so long its master, that the world thought him austere and cold and hardly human! The stern brevity and directness of his speech became glowing and winged with "the love of love, the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn": he spoke and worked with "thunders of thought

and flames of fierce desire," and yet did not suffer himself to be carried away even by the strained passion of the moment. And the bitterness of the pang was terrible. That "hypocritical" England should howl at "immorality" was but natural in his eyes; that Ireland, of her own free will, should cast him off would have seemed but justifiable, however painful. But that Ireland should do so at England's bidding was the great betrayal, the national humiliation, the disastrous disgrace; and that the leaders in the shame should be his own creatures, and all, doubtless, "honourable men." So, if he fought for himself, it was not for love of power in itself, but for the work and achievement of his manhood, lest it be utterly undone, and Ireland enter upon a new period of sordid wranglings and patriotic impotence. Ireland had "the Man," who could bring round "the Hour." Parnell felt the hideous irony of fate which destroyed the first in the name of the second.

Mr. O'Brien, with masterly skill in the choice and disposition of his material, has presented to us a living man, intelligible and credible, without in any degree lessening our sense of his wonderfulness and most rare individuality. He has portrayed him with all those limitations, moral and intellectual, which seem necessary to the making and moulding of a certain order of greatness. A small man has gone down to history as "single-speech Hamilton"; this great man might be known as "single-will Parnell." The thought of Ireland seized him in late youth or early manhood, and the thought fell upon almost virgin soil: no legacies of ancestral suffering, no memories of martyred or exiled forefathers, no exigencies of social or religious position, brought home to him the national cause and claim. But when they came, they came home indeed; they came to a will, a mind, an heart, incapable of vacillation, forgetfulness, or fear. They came to one in whom fixity of purpose was combined with endless adaptability of means to ends: to one who, if not always and essentially



*instus*, was magnificently *propositi tenax*. These pages are, as it were, a glorification of will ; we might almost say that Parnell irresistibly predestined his own free-will, and went forward by inevitable compulsion of his own creating. By the side of most Irishmen, in whom versatility is a charm and instability a danger, he appears the incarnation of set and sworn endeavour. Others, and better men than he, have hoped and longed to redeem their country ; this man, with all his subtleties and wiles, *knew*, had the child-like simplicity of feeling *sure*, that he could do it. He did not do it ; but if it can be done in his way, he must come again to do it.

## PASCAL

[*The Academy*, January 30, 1897.]

PASCAL, says Sainte-Beuve, "is at the heart of Christianity itself" : Pascal, says Hume, is a Christian Diogenes, the great example of artificial life. Assuredly, he is nothing by halves, be it worldling or convert, sceptic or believer, physicist or Jansenist. Pascal "the stern and sick," as Goethe calls him, was not made for golden mediocrities, but for passions and ardours in their fullest vehemence. His sister and biographer notes well his *humeur bouillante*. Of most men in notable extremes it is commonly not hard to give an exact account, but Pascal must always abide in a twilight. For though Port-Royal be intimately known to us through countless sources, and though portions of Pascal's life be plain enough, yet the work from which we try to fashion the true image of his soul, remains a thing of shreds and patches. . . . Pascal in his loneliness, agony, ardour, records the cries of his heart, the subtleties of his brain, with painful haste and zeal, sometimes with an incoherence not wholly sane. St. Augustine and Rousseau leave us their *Confessions* in perfect form : the passion is in orderly display. But Pascal's thoughts are like snatches of sudden

prayer, like a dream's broken talk, like Hamlet's soliloquies, interspersed with wide passages of methodical reasoning.

His scientific glory crowned him upon the summit of the Puy de Dôme, the scene of his experiments in atmospheric pressure: fame was there, pride and ambition, in the free, exhilarating air. But when he wrote the *Pensées* he saw ever beside him a deep pit opening its unfathomed glooms and fears: an hallucination, doubtless, bred of his miraculous escape (as he held it to be), from the accident at the Pont de Neuilly; but the delusion had its intensity of true meaning. Jansenism, that sombre and harsh way of thought, a would-be Catholic Calvinism or Montanism, warped and darkened the world to his eyes. Yet, Jansenism apart, Pascal was one of those Christians who have no possibility of being happy, except through the joy of sorrow and the delight of abnegation. To Théophile Gautier Christianity was odious, as the cause of melancholy, mysticism, and self-denial, because it humiliated the natural man, and poisoned pleasure, and induced an infinite longing. Those were its glories and charms for Pascal, who came perilously near to voluptuousness in the rapture of self-torture, the ecstasies of asceticism. One Good Friday, Dr. Johnson, not to be interrupted in his devotions by Boswell, gave him the *Pensées*. That dear and ridiculous gentleman found in them "a truly divine unction." But unction is not the word; Fénelon, Francis of Sales, have unction; Pascal has a prostrate self-abasement magnificently complete, in which "imbecile nature" is bidden to keep silence, and "impotent reason" to humble itself. All of which is simple, logical, orthodox Christianity: the necessary attitude of man in the presence of the ultimate mysteries, in the ante-chamber of realities. But Pascal, brooding over his *Deus absconditus*, cannot conclude with a complacent expression of man's limited faculties, and a few pious words about doing our best with what light we have. He waxes exultant and sonorous, terrible and savage, lyrical and mournful, as he

dwells upon the estate of "man the admirable, the pitiable." But never a word of whining pessimism, petulant reproach: only a splendid self-contempt, a scourging of the "hateful I." Nothing, says St. Ambrose, is loftier than humility, which cannot be exalted, being the superior state; and Pascal's self-abjection is his tribute to man's marred greatness and high destiny. The *Pensées* keep up a perpetual harping upon the greatness and littleness of man, as revealed in their greatness by Christianity. "His very infirmities prove man's greatness: they are the infirmities of a great lord, of a discrowned king." Upon every page we think of Pascal as a baptized Lucretius, whose rolling thunders and swift lightnings come from Sinai and Calvary: he is one of the elect sad souls whose profound severity is heartening.

We cannot judge of what value would have been his *Defence of Christianity*, for which most of the *Pensées* are suggestions and notes; probably, it would have been the supreme masterpiece of French prose, if not of all modern prose, but unconvincing to the unbelieving, and perilous to the faithful. Pyrrhonism, in Pascal's sense a kind of Christian Agnosticism, is a philosophic necessary of life; but Pascal was no metaphysician or theologian, and his reasoned treatise would assuredly have crossed forbidden boundaries. Like his favourite Montaigne, he had no method in the observation of life; his proficiency in mathematics, that precise study, led him to distrust and to decry less narrowly exacting principles of thought. "*Il faut avoir ces trois qualités: pyrrhonien, géomètre, chrétien soumis.*" There is no heresy in that, but it does not augur well for a work of professed apologetics. Not his reasoning, but his temperament, not his arguments, but his ideas are what enrich the *Pensées*, making them one of the world's great books. Those to whom the Olympian serenity of Goethe, his "classic equability," seems an intolerable imposture, take instinctively to Pascal: he humbles them and exalts,

inspires and saddens; his irony scathes, his compassion salves. His "*profondeur de tristesse et d'éloquence*," to use Villemain's phrase, sends forth doctrines more commanding and more possible than exhortations to live in "the Whole, the Good, the Beautiful": the straitest sect of the Manichees seems more plausible than that. "*La maladie est l'état naturel des chrétiens*" is Pascal's teaching; and, really, we have read much of the same sort in the Gospels! It is for insisting upon this side of Christianity that Mr. Cotter Morison, a strenuous anti-Christian, calls Catholicism "more Scriptural" than Protestantism. Not that a Christian life, says Pascal, is "*une vie de tristesse*"; but because Christian sorrow is more delightful than all worldly joy. Pascal, author of the *Provincial Letters*, was no dusky, dreary penitent, soured and selfish; he had been an accomplished man of this world, and he became an accomplished man of the next, whose "conversation in heaven" had its gracious dignities. "Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" has been quoted of Pascal. "Society" in Jerusalem may have said the same of Paul, after that deplorable delusion upon the way to Damascus. Passion, indeed, is the note of the *Pensées*, an intense, devouring energy of soul and spirit; but there is no sign of any mental degradation. His bodily pains were not those of the crazed fanatic; his style is still trenchant and pure: even what seem to be lapses from perfect sanity may very well be but the hasty phrases of a man in pain, jotting down rough notes, single words, mere indications of a meaning intelligible to himself. The world has not forgiven its deserter. What the world would pardon in an illiterate friar it does not pardon in Pascal the scientific and polite. With Bayle, it calls him a "paradox of the human race." Volumes have been written to prove that he was, and was not, Catholic, Protestant, sceptic, believer: his brain and his MSS. have been examined and forced to yield evidence. Verily, it is dangerous to be a very

passionate Christian, trampling on the world's pride—with a greater. "Mediocrity alone is good!" says Pascal in his contempt.

"The heart has its reasons unknown to reason" is one of his familiar, famous sayings; his finer *Pensées* are of that intimate kind. True, he argues much, even to the verge of naked cynicism, about the "chances" of religion being true: the celebrated argument of the wager. But he speaks far more of Christianity as in itself desirable and delightful, as ennobling and dignifying its receiver. We fight inch by inch against conviction if told that a friend has played us false; but we have an immediate longing to believe the truth of some honourable report. Pascal falls in Platonic love (to use the term correctly for once) with Christianity; he cannot do otherwise. "Who can withhold credence and adoration from so divine a light?" And it was for the honour, as he held, of Christianity in its pure grandeur that he fought his jealous fight with the Jesuit casuistry and for the Jansenist heresy, and became more casuistical than any Jesuit in the process. He was untainted by the sometimes worldly motives which were mixed with the acts of Port-Royal; his pride and scorn and stubbornness were for the sake of a Christianity about, as he thought, to be watered down, and made cheap, and given over to "the crowd, incapable of perfectness." He lacked that mark of the saints, pitilessness for himself, but boundless charity for others; his Puritanism was averse from all softness and indulgence towards the world in little things, that it might be won to the greater things. In that he was absolutely outside the whole tradition of the historical Church, and allied with a goodly number of heretics, perfectionists of many kinds, who have sought to lay burdens not to be borne on the multitude. He professes a full and firm obedience to the divine authority of Rome; and yet: "If my *Letters* are condemned in Rome, still what *I* condemn in my *Letters* is condemned in Heaven!" It smacks of

Lucifer and Luther; there is some "hateful I" about that. The fervent passion of the man, jealous for the cause he believes divine, drives him into inconsistency; he was not, indeed, a Lamennais, but much of a Savonarola or a Sarpi, in fighting for his convictions against his superiors. Reasons of the heart account for the worst in him, as for the best: he would hardly have been pleased to learn that Gibbon read the *Provincial Letters* once a year as a model of theological argument. Not the controversies of his day, but his thoughts on eternal things preserve his glory. Like Wordsworth, but with a more personal and fiery passion, he contemplates the tragedy of life, its "fierce confederate storm" of sorrows, its heights and deeps, turning the light of a restless imagination upon the secular scene, and noting the poignancies of the play. He has made his "*renonciation totale et douce*," but the burning renunciant sends his thoughts far over the world and its history, appraising the value of things, letting escape him no trace of man's degradation or man's grandeur, eager to show what Christianity can do for both. A lover of superiorities, he has pity for their opposites, but mere contempt for the meagre and the middling; he is capable of making submission to evil, but not a compromise, and, if the heights of sanctity be unattainable, he will still attempt them. France has no writer, certainly no lay writer, who resembles him in his superb austerity: "*ou mourra seul*," he said, and in truth he both was and is a man of isolation, dwelling apart. "*Pensée fait la grandeur de l'homme*": profoundly, absolutely, is that true of Pascal. He is no phrasemonger, witty, light, clever; "an epigrammatist—a bad man," is one of his rough jottings. Nor is he the elegant and querulous keeper of a sentimental journal. He is one of the voices which at rare intervals come from the heart of a man, and go to the hearts of men: *cor ad cor loquitur*, and deep answers deep.

## ERASMUS, MY DARLING

[*The Daily Chronicle*, March 15, 1902.]

SIR THOMAS MORE, heart-friend and close colleague of Erasmus in his fight against human folly, against obstinate obscurantism and rash reform, wrote thus in his "Confutation" of Tyndale : all More's winning sweetness is fragrant in the words :—

"He asketh me why I have not contended with Erasmus whom he calleth my darling, of all his long while, for translating this word *ecclesia* into this word *congregatio*. And then he cometh forth with his fit proper taunt that I favour him of likelihood for making of his book *Moria* in my house. There had he hit me, save for lack of a little salt. I have not contended with Erasmus, my darling, because I find no such malicious intent and purpose that I find with Tyndale. For had I found with Erasmus, my darling, the shrewd intent and purpose that I find with Tyndale, Erasmus, my darling, should be no more my darling. But I find in Erasmus, my darling, that he detesteth and abhorreth the errors and heresies that Tyndale plainly teacheth and abideth by ; and therefore Erasmus, my darling, shall be my dear darling still."

Probably most of those whose libraries contain works little more beloved than the nine Leyden folios of Erasmus, also come to look upon him as their "darling," as an intimate and dear friend, gravely smiling out of the past, yet present and modern ; but there is, of course, also the pure scholar's attitude towards a chief pioneer in scholarship. Gibbon, who understood esteem but not love, perhaps did not feel the charm, so much as the greatness, of Erasmus. Writing of Basle he says : "In 1459 the University was founded by Pope Pius II., who had been Secretary to the Council. But what is a Council or an University to the presses of Froben and the studies of Erasmus?" The late Dean Church, in a letter about Basle, curiously and unconsciously reminiscent of Gibbon, which we quote for the interest of its last sentence, has said :—

"The memory of the Council is shadowy. . . . But the interest of Basle is about Erasmus, and his printer Froben, and his painter Holbein, and his friend and executor Boniface Amerbach, the collector of all the Holbein relics which enrich the museum, and his just rival Æcolanpadius, the Gwinglian reformer. . . . I have been reading about Erasmus since, and with great interest. He is a man whom it is impossible to admire ; and yet, in such a time of turmoil, violence, and breaking-up of foundations, one cannot but have sympathy for his perplexities, and wonder for his bright and keen intellect, his indefatigable laboriousness, and his singular good sense. But he was selfish, insincere, and mean-spirited."

It is rash to differ from so delicate a judge of character, so impartial a historian and critic, as was the late Dean of St. Paul's ; and yet we cannot but think that the Dean, had he written for publication, would have modified that judgment, so intelligible, yet so wounding to the lovers of Erasmus by its touch of excess in a half-truth. Doubtless, Erasmus was a man of less noble make and mould than More ; but then More seems to us a man with the finest spirit of a Periclean Greek perfected and deepened and enriched by the consecration of Christianity. Erasmus would hardly have mounted the scaffold to martyrdom on Tower Hill, as did his indomitable friend, or, if he had done so, it would hardly have been in the brave spirit of him whose "gay genius played," as Wordsworth has it, "With the inoffensive sword of native wit, Than the bare axe more luminous and keen." Erasmus died on the eve of being created a cardinal ; but no one has ever suggested that he had in him the marks and makings of a saint.

He had something in common with Matthew Arnold : a like satiric, yet profoundly felt, impatience with intellectual pedantry and social folly ; a like consequent air of almost irritating superiority ; a like sort of consequent isolation from those who take strong definite sides and can comprehend no middle position. Arnold made his famous triple division of the British people into Barbarians, Philistines, Populace



Erasmus, as Sir Richard Jebb has justly observed, ignored the illiterate altogether: not, we think, from contempt, or lack of kindness of heart, but because his whole mind and its concerns were so entirely engrossed and occupied elsewhere. But "the barbarians" is a constant term of his; it answers very much to Arnold's twofold Barbarians and Philistines. He was no sledge-hammer controversialist; in an age of extraordinary vehemence his delicacy, his subtlety, were bound to be ineffective. "I do not agree," he writes to his old schoolfellow Pope Adrian, "with Luther on a single point"; yet, "one party says that if I do not attack Luther, it is a sign that I agree with him." What he longed for, laboured for, was the supremacy of reason, just judgment, the trained intellect and the comprehensive spirit: he found them scarce anywhere.

Erasmus was all for reformation; he detested deformation. To fling to the winds the heirlooms and rich heritage of the past because of its rusty incrustations or fungous excrescences, was to him an intolerable lunacy, an exasperating frenzy, of devastation. *Spartam nactus es: hanc exorna*. Purify, elevate, restore, but do not destroy. Mr. Karl Pearson, in his brilliant, indignant and generally true essays upon "Humanism in Germany" and "Martin Luther," has put this aspect of the case pithily and well. "The leaders of the Rational Humanists were Reuchlin and Erasmus. Their party and its true work of culture were shipwrecked by the Reformation storm." "The Catholic Church needed reform urgently enough, but the reform which it needed was that of Erasmus, not that of Luther." "We have to inquire whether our modern thought has not been the outcome of a gradual return to the principles of Erasmus: a continuous rejection, one by one, of every doctrine and every conception of Luther." Landor described himself as "radically a conservative in all things useful." Hawthorne, as in old echo, declared himself "radically conservative"; Tennyson said, "I am a liberal,

and would conserve the hopes of man." They belonged, then, to the school of Erasmus.

Happily,—for polemics are almost always as distressing as they are fascinating,—his *Epistles* [made English] show us Erasmus in the first half of his career; Erasmus the friend of scholars; moving about Europe in that brotherhood of scholarship which exists no longer, now that Latin is no more the common colloquial tongue and instrument of intercourse of gentlemen and scholars among all nations, nor the mastery of classic learning a freemasonry of minds. The Erasmus of the letters is the ardent and reverential champion of Cicero and Jerome; the impassioned and indefatigable student, who writes to a friend: "I have been applying my whole mind to the study of Greek; and as soon as I receive any money I shall first buy Greek authors, and afterwards some clothes." A more strenuous apostle and evangelist and pioneer of "the humanities" never was: he glows with enthusiasm at the thought of scholarship and scholars. Here is a passage from a letter to an English friend in Italy, which should interest English readers and fill English scholars with just pride:—

"How do you like our England, you will say? Believe me, my Robert, when I answer that I never liked anything so much before. I find the climate both pleasant and wholesome; and I have met with so much kindness, and so much learning, not hackneyed and trivial, but deep, accurate, ancient, Latin and Greek, that but for the pleasure of seeing it, I do not so much now care for Italy. When I hear my Colet, I seem to be listening to Plato himself. In Grocin, who does not marvel at such a perfect round of learning? What can be more acute, profound and delicate than the judgment of Linacre? What has nature ever created more gentle, more sweet, more happy than the genius of Thomas More? I need not go through the list. It is marvellous how abundant is the harvest of ancient learning in this country, to which you ought all the sooner to return."

Erasmus was an aristocrat of letters, loving their finer spirit, feeling an impatient irritation at the thought and in the presence of those who had not drunk of their wisdom

and undergone their discipline. In all matters, scholarly or ecclesiastical, his attitude towards the multitude was: "Lord! what fools these mortals be!" He had not the intensity of moral wrath wherewith Lucretius thundered his *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum*—Lucretius, of whom a modern scholar has said that of all the ancients he, Socrates alone excepted, comes nearest to the type of "religious reform." There was nothing in Erasmus of all that is implicit in those untranslatable words and right Roman virtues, *gravitas* and *auctoritas*. He is more closely akin to Cicero than to Caesar, to Rabelais and Montaigne than to Pascal and Spinoza. He felt that it is so easy to be vehement and intense, so hard to be gracious and urbane! It was very hard in those clashing and perplexing days. Yet he was no trimmer: like Luther, he uttered his "*Ich kann nich anders*," though of a subtler sort. "*Qui sait*," asks Renan, "*si la finesse d'esprit ne consiste pas à s'abstenir de conclure?*"

## POETRY AND PATRIOTISM IN IRELAND

[The second essay in a book published by subscription called *Poetry and Ireland: Essays* by W. B. Yeats and Lionel Johnson: The Cuala Press, Churchtown, Dundrum, 1908. "Poetry and Patriotism" had been delivered as a lecture by the author before the Irish Literary Society, in London, probably in or about the year 1894. The exact date does not seem to be discoverable.]

It appears to be the creed of some critics, that in the Irish poetry of some sixty, fifty, and forty years ago, in the poetry of *The Nation* and of "Young Ireland," with their immediate predecessors and followers, we have a fixed and unalterable standard whereby to judge all Irish poetry, past and present and to come. In the poetry of that great generation lies beauty, all beauty, and nothing but beauty! Against any living Irish poet who writes in any style uncultivated then, is brought the dreadful charge of being

artistic: and sometimes, if it be a very flagrant case, the unspeakable accusation of being English. Now I heartily hate the cant of "Art for art's sake:" I have spent years in trying to understand what is meant by that imbecile phrase. Also, I have a healthy hatred of the West Briton heresy. Further, no Irishman living has a greater love, and a greater admiration, for the splendid poetry of Davis, Mangan, and their fellows. But I dislike coercion in literature: and it seems to me an uncritical dictation of the critics, when they tell a writer that he or she is no true Irish poet, because he or she does not write rousing ballads, or half-humorous love-songs, or rhetorical laments, or a mixture of historical and political verse; and because he or she takes exceeding pains with his or her workmanship and art. An attention to form and style is apparently an English vice: well! certainly it is an English thing, just as it was Greek and Roman, yes! and Irish also, once. The intricacy and delicacy, the artfulness and elaboration, of Gaelic and Cymric verse, are unparalleled in European literature: so minute, so detailed, so difficult was the attention paid to the technical side of poetry, that Irish and Welsh scholars of unblemished patriotism have deplored it as fatal to the free poetical spirit. There is not a critic in Europe who has written upon Celtic literature without noting the singular charm, the *curiosa felicitas*, of Celtic style: we all know the admiration of Renan in France, of Arnold in England, for its grace and beauty. Music and poetry were held by our forefathers in an almost religious veneration: the poet passed through a long discipline of the strictest severity before he reached the high dignities of his profession. There is no modern cultivator of arduous poetical forms, the ballade, rondeau, Villanelle, triolet, sonnet, who endures half the labour that was demanded by the ancient laws of Irish and Welsh metre. An Irish poet of to-day may lack a thousand Irish virtues: but if he give a devoted care to the perfecting of his art, he will have at least one Celtic

note, one characteristic Irish virtue. While he is intent upon the artful turns and cadences of his music and the delicate choice of his words, striving to achieve the last graces and perfections possible to his work, he is at one in spirit with the poets of old Ireland. The old Irish forms are barely possible in English : but their spirit is attainable. And if he choose to take the more subtle and ingenious of English forms, he may do so without the crime of borrowing from the enemy : for scarce one of them is native to England. Considering to what magnificent uses Rome turned the forms and metres of Greece, and England those of France and Italy, without ceasing to be Roman and English, we need not fear lest an Irish poet should cease to be Irish, if he study and borrow and adapt the best achievements of foreign art to the service of the Irish Muses. But Irish poetry to-day, I may be told, should be a national weapon : we want to reach and touch the hearts of our listeners, to fan the sacred fire, to be passionate and burning and impetuous. Why trouble about minute proprieties or delicate graces of art, so long as our verse go with a ring and a swing, celebrating the glories of Ireland, or with a sigh and a cry, lamenting her griefs? Is there not something cold-blooded and slow-pulsed in writing without vehemence and a rush of sentiment? Leave metre-mongering to the young decadents and æsthetes of Paris and London : and let Irish verse sweep unfettered as the Irish winds, and surge free as the Irish seas, and satisfy the Irish people. Well! like most stump oratory, that is very high and mighty and impressive : but it is not argument. Passionate impulse and patient pains are not incompatible. On the other side, there is sometimes an equally unreasoning depreciation of anything rhetorical, anything spontaneous : and the whole battle, the whole confusion, comes of ignoring the fact that there are many legitimate kinds of poetry, that each and every kind has a right to live, and that we can only insist upon a poem's

being good of its own kind. One most legitimate kind of poetry is the political and social poetry that is directly practical in its appeal: propagandist poetry. At a time of national excitement, verse may be a tremendous ally of the national cause: verse that is a trumpet-call to action; verse full of great memories and of great prophecies; verse that denounces, inspires, triumphs, wails in melodies memorable and moving. It may laugh, or weep, or shout the war-cry: use the keenest satire in the homeliest language, or thunder in the accents of a Hebrew prophet: it will be thrown off at a white heat, it must be ready at every turn, and never flag. It passes from singing of a thousand years ago, to singing of yesterday and to-morrow; from the champions of romance, to the champions of to-day. It must be vehement and clear, emphatic and direct: it must employ all the resource of bold rhetoric, large phrases and great words. It must fall irresistibly into music, and be sung by the crowds in the street: it must stir the blood, and thrill the pulses, and set the heart on fire. Such verse was the best verse of Young Ireland: and I do not know, in any language, a body of political and social verse at once so large and so good. Much of it rises far above the level of occasional verse, and is superb national poetry; some of it was written by men who would have been poets under any circumstances, by the compulsion of nature and the gift of fate. There is no lack of reasons for the immense influence of this verse upon subsequent literature: for one thing, it was the first great general outburst of Irish verse in English; Moore had sung by himself, and not only in English, but in England. Now, for the first time, a mass of national literature came into existence, written in English by politicians, scholars, men of the learned professions, as well as by men of the people, all living and working for Ireland and in Ireland. No such literary glory had accompanied the rise of the United Irishman, or any other national movement: it showed the world that if the

ancient speech of Ireland were doomed and dying, yet the Irish genius could express the Irish spirit in the language of their conquerors, with no loss of national enthusiasm and national passion. Headed, as the movement was, by at least two or three men of literary genius, and a score or so of exceptional literary talents, its writings, and especially its verse, became as it were, the sacred scriptures of the national cause. And for Ireland, they are indeed κτήματα ἐς αἰὲν, possessions for all time, justly venerated and loved. But this very splendour of achievement blinded, in some ways, the critical faculties: we have been tempted to forget that the work, done in the rapture and heat of a great enterprise, must have the defects of its qualities. In many cases the penalty paid for immediate success, won on an instant, was a lack of perfection, the abiding marks of haste. And much of the work, admirable alike in intention and in execution, had no pretensions to being work of the highest order: it belongs, definitely and decidedly, to the class of popular political verse. Now, whilst the peasant poetry, the folk-songs of most countries, (and Ireland is no exception), are beautiful, and artistically excellent, the more purely political verse, the verse expressing national sentiments of hope and fear, defiance or doubt, are always inferior to the folk-songs, and are often abominable. If there be a worse poem than "God save the Queen," I do not know it:—

"Confound their politics,  
Frustrate their knavish tricks!"

I ask you, is that poetry? Is it even decent verse? Does it show any fine and beautiful use of language? Or, take the "Marseillaise," and "Wacht am Rhein"; are they distinguished and superior examples of French and German poetry? Yet to hear a vast multitude of French or Germans singing those songs, swayed with one storm of emotion, brings all the blood to one's heart, and the tears to one's eyes: the air seems charged with electricity. A

regimental march may be very far from good music : but the first roll of the drums and thrilling of the fifes make many a man "burn to be a soldier." It is simply and solely association that has this magical effect : association can turn downright ugliness into a thing of beauty, or, at the least, into something lovable. Think of some house which you have known all your life : it may be ugly, uncomfortable, and all that is distressing ; but what a world of memories centre there, and make it the dearest place on earth to you ! It is the same with everything : remember Scott in Italy, blind to its beauty and its charm, hungering for the heather and the wild hills of his home, and murmuring old Jacobite songs in places golden with classic memories : or the Brontës, sick at heart in glittering Brussels, with longing for their lonely Yorkshire moors. Think with what regret we consent to the necessary destruction of some church or public building no longer serviceable, but thronged with old recollections ! I need not speak here of the Irish exile's hunger for his old home in the old land, however prosperous he be elsewhere, and however hard may have been the old life. It is this way that things, in themselves undesirable, receive a consecration from memory and habit and association. The most magnificent lyric in the world could not replace "God save the Queen" in the heart of the loyal Englishman. But associations do not alter facts : the house, the landscape, the poem endeared to us, have no attraction for the stranger, the dispassionate critic, who does not feel their glamour. And so the verse of Young Ireland, good, bad, and indifferent, has been accepted altogether, as a memory to the older men, as a tradition to the younger : this not wholly to the advantage of Irish literature, though much to the credit of Irish nature.

Perhaps the most irritating mode of criticism is to complain of the thing criticized for not being something else. A poet writes a little book of light songs, and he is told that this is all very well in its way, but why does he



not try his hand at an epic? He writes, let us say, dreams and all manner of imaginative things, in plaintive, lovely cadences, about the faeries, or about the mysteries of the world, birth and life and death, writing out of the depths of his own nature; and lo! instead of being grateful, we abuse him for not writing historical ballads, valiant and national, upon Patrick Sarsfield or Owen Roe. But what if he be wholly incapable of writing historical ballads? Shelley said of himself, that to go to him for human nature was like going to a ginshop for a leg of mutton. Not every poet can be, or is bound to be, a Tyrtæus. I know no greater patriotic poems than certain sonnets of Milton or Wordsworth; certain passages of Shakespeare and Spenser, Virgil and Dante; certain plays of Æschylus, and odes of Pindar; but not one of them could send the soldier on to death or victory with such a heroism as many a simple soldier's song could rouse: yet the simple song is not, therefore, the greater poetry. Except, it may be, in some primitive societies, such as was possibly the Homeric, the greater poetry is not the most popular. Perhaps it should be: but that is another question. And when, as in our own country, there is a native instinct that prompts the mass of the people to love music and poetry, and any ancient tradition of reverence towards them, we are not unnaturally disposed to estimate all music and poetry by the popular standards, and not always by the best popular standards. Surely, we say, poetry that touches the hearts of all, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, is the true poetry: let us be simple, unsophisticated, natural in our tastes. Let others write for cliques and coteries, and live upon academic applause or mutual admiration: we are content with a poetry popular and patriotic. It sounds very manly and independent, a refreshing contrast to the affected æstheticism of certain schools: but it cuts us off for ever from the company of the great classics. It is equally fatal to be for ever clamouring for a great classic, and demanding him

of all the fates. It is useless to be perpetually longing for a man who shall do for Ireland what Scott did for Scotland : it is ungenerous and unjust, when a writer does his best in his own way, to say that this is not the immortal work which Ireland wants. We do not reproach a buttercup for not being a rose. I am inclined to think that a nation does not produce its greatest art in times of storm and stress, but at and after the period of triumph : when the nation is exulting in its strength and glory, with a sense of new youth and health and joy. Melancholy, and sorrow, and the cry of pain, it has been said by some, are more poetical than serenity and ardour : for my own part, I do not believe it. Rather, I believe that the Irish poetry of free and triumphant Ireland will have the wonderful joyousness and happy splendour of the old heroic and romantic Ireland, chastened and tempered by the seriousness inseparable from Christianity. Meanwhile, let us accept and encourage all excellence : there is room for all. Let us have our ringing rhetoric, strong verse with the clash of swords in it ; our sorrowful dirges for the dear and dead of to-day, and of long ages past ; our homely songs of laughter and of tears ; but let us welcome all who write for the love of Ireland, even if they write in fashions less familiar. It is absurd, and insulting to Ireland, to think that Irish genius cannot make the Irish spirit felt in any form that is good and fine of itself. Think of Farquhar and Steele, Goldsmith and Sheridan : they spent nearly their whole lives in England among Englishmen, under the strongest English influences, and they wrote in English forms for English readers : yet we feel the grace, the gentle humour, the delicacy and charm, which stamp their work as Irish. After all, who is to decide what is, absolutely and definitely, the Celtic and Irish note ? Many a time I have shown my English friends Irish poems, which Irish critics have declared to be un-Irish : and the English verdict has constantly been : " How un-English ! how Celtic ! what a strange, remote, far-away

beauty in the music and in the colour!" These poems, then, can find no resting-place in either country; are they to wait becalmed in mid-channel? The most singular criticisms are sometimes made upon these hapless poets. My friend Mr. Yeats has been informed that he is a disciple of Rossetti and of Tennyson; now, no two poets could be less alike than Rossetti and Tennyson; and no one could be less like either of them than Mr. Yeats. But he dares to write in his own style, upon his own themes; and because they are not the style and the themes familiar to us from old associations, we rush to the conclusion that he is treading in the footsteps of some English poet, despising Irish art. Another instance: I have heard it said that the four volumes of Mrs. Hinkson show a steady increase in artistic power, but a noticeable decrease in the true Irish spirit of poetry: an extremely doubtful compliment to the true Irish spirit. Cardinal Newman tells us of the village schools in his youth, where the charge for teaching good manners was an "extra twopence." Is artistic workmanship in our poetry worth but an "extra twopence"? What the critic meant was that in Mrs. Hinkson's earlier work there were a greater fluency and flow of sentiment, less restraint and careful finish, more obvious rhetoric and impulsiveness. The dainty delicacy of the later work, its mastery of rhythm and curbing of haste, were lost upon him: the idea that all art implies discipline and austerity of taste, a constant progress towards an ideal perfection, though his earliest ancestors knew it well, seemed strange to him. Perhaps the most familiar of English poems is Gray's "Elegy": the two loveliest stanzas Gray ever wrote he deliberately rejected from the poem, because they seemed to him redundant, disproportionate, a dwelling too long upon one thought. Dante speaks of his long labour at his art as the work which had made him lean and gaunt and worn. This passion for perfection seems to me as truly Celtic a thing as the ready

indulgence of sentiment : our illuminations, our penmanship, our work in stone and metal, all our arts of design, show an infinite love of taking pains. The very heretics among the Celts, as Pelagius and Erigena, exemplify the Celtic subtlety. But this "battle of the books" is not confined to the Celts of Ireland : the same question, in very much the same form, rages in Wales. Go to an Eisteddfod, or to any Welsh gathering of literary patriots : you will probably hear discussions upon the true Welsh spirit, upon English influence, upon the characteristics of the ancient literature and the new, upon the possibility of a Welshman's writing English in a way patriotically and unmistakably Welsh. This patriotic anxiety for a national literature is an unimpeachable virtue, but it should be displayed with dignity and confidence. Many of us, at present, are somewhat agitated and nervous ; we ask hasty and suspicious questions : "Is that quite Celtic ? Is this book typically Irish ? Yes ! they are certainly fine poems, but are they not English in quality ; have they the genuine national note ; is it the work that a patriot should be doing ?" All this is put forward with a certain querulousness and captiousness : it seems to imply a certain distrust of the Irish genius, and of one another. And the tumult of our political passions is apt to disturb our judgments. I would rather read a fine poem upon Sarsfield and the "Defence of Limerick," than upon Walker and the "Defence of Derry" ; but if Colonel Saunderson, or Dr. Kane, were to give us a stirring poem upon the courage and endurance of Walker and the 'prentices of Derry, without ill-feeling and bad blood, I should reckon it a gain to our literature. Yet our Irish critic who spoke his mind to that effect, may be thought a bit of an Orangeman at heart. It would be a case of *Timco Danaos et dona ferentes* : we should look with suspicion upon the poetical gifts of our political opponents. And there seems to be no place for a poet who, though he be intensely national in temperament and sympathy, may

be unfitted by nature to write poetry with an obvious and immediate bearing upon the national cause. Imagine a poet with no strong taste for history, no fierce rhetorical note in his music, no power of stirring a popular enthusiasm ; yet, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, Irish and nothing but Irish. Upon occasions of great emotion, a leader's death, a national victory, what you will, odes and songs may be forthcoming by the score from others : he will feel as deep a sorrow, or as wild a joy, but his Muse will be silent. He will talk of these things as much as others, or write as much about them in prose ; but in poetry he has not the necessary gift. He is not proud of lacking it : he may be sorry that he has not that string to his lyre. But at any rate he has not got it, and so he cannot play upon it. And forthwith we have our doubts : we begin to think that such a poet is of no service to the cause. Or, perhaps we ask him for an historical novel upon Ireland in Tudor or Stuart times ; or for an epic of the Red Branch Knights, or the Irish Saints ; or for a tragedy upon Emmet or Lord Edward : whilst his whole faculty and disposition may be lyrical, and meditative, and personal. Or, perhaps, we fall foul of his lyrics for not having certain simplicities and beauties dear to us in the folk-songs of our country : but who said that they had, or tried to have, them ? There may be charms in the new verse, not less Irish than the old. A wider, deeper, higher vision would recognise that Irish nationality and Irish patriotism can make themselves powerful in a thousand forms and themes of literature. Consider the many English echoes, or reproductions, or imitations of Greek forms and themes : from Milton's "Samson Agonistes" up to Mr. Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon ;" they are intensely English, not really Greek. A living literature cannot help being national : it may feed upon the literature of the past, and of other nations ; but, if it be good literature, it must bear the sign and seal of its own nationality, and of its own

age. Indeed, nationality lives in literature and art, when it is almost dead in other things : they are the expressions of the soul of a country ; they are racy of the soil ; they refuse to serve their country's conquerors. On the contrary, they take their captors captive, as history has told us a hundred times. A cosmopolitan artist, a citizen of the world, with no local patriotism in his heart, has never yet done anything memorable in poetry, or in anything else. Could all his wild philosophy, his vast pondering upon universal problems, his devotion to the poets and thinkers of Germany, make Carlyle anything but a Scotch Calvinist, a son of John Knox, a child of the Covenanters? Or could the wild romance, the brilliant levity, the mocking gaiety and cynicism, of his Parisian life, make the German and Jewish Heine anything but a son of the German Fatherland, and a child of the house of Israel? It is among the strongest of earthly instincts, this clinging to our nationality and race : this, far more than diplomacy, has changed the face of Europe in our country, and may change it still more. Poetry and patriotism are each other's guardian angels, and therefore inseparable. Virgil's master was Homer, Dante's master was Virgil, Milton's masters were Dante, Virgil, and Homer : yet could four poems be less like each other, could four poems be more intensely national than the *Iliad*, the *Æneid*, the *Divine Comedy*, and *Paradise Lost*? Unquestionably, we would rather have our poets choose Irish themes, and sing of Tara sooner than of Troy ; of Ossian sooner than of Orpheus : but if they went to China or to Peru for their inspiration, the result would be neither Chinese nor Peruvian, but "kindly Irish of the Irish" still. Our race is not lost by spreading itself over the world, and our literature would not lose its Irish accent by expeditions into all lands and times. Let Irish literature be de-Anglicized, by all means : away with all feeble copies of the fashionable stuff that happens to amuse London Society for

a season, and even with mere copies of distinctly good English work ! It is neither national, nor patriotic, to wait eagerly and humbly upon the tastes and the verdicts of the English public and of the English press. But if we are to foster, encourage, and develop Irish literature, and not least of all, Irish poetry, it must be with a wise generosity ; in a finely national, not in a pettily provincial, spirit. Take the revival of German literature and its emancipation from French influence : that great movement which the Germans call *Aufklärung* and the French the *éclaircissement* of Germany. Beginning, practically, with Lessing and Winckelmann and Herder, continued by Goethe and Schiller, and later by Heine, it created the first splendid period of national German literature. It perpetrated endless absurdities, but it succeeded ; and that because of its free and liberal spirit. The pioneers and chiefs of the movement pressed everything into its service : Greek art and literature, all the arts of Italy, the Elizabethan drama, Macpherson's *Ossian*, the folk-songs and ancient lays of many lands, the romance of the Middle Ages ; all that an ardent curiosity, or a profound scholarship, could reach, was sought out and studied and brought to bear upon the revival of German literature. And the result was magnificently German : there was no vague, cosmopolitan, unnational spirit in the results of that immense enthusiasm. One cannot read the memoirs, biographies, histories of that time, still less the poetry, without feeling oneself in the presence of an irresistible patriotism. And everything helped, every study and pursuit : if German prose, of all ugly things, came to be written with the lucidity of Plato's Greek ; if German poetry rose from the dead, and sang a thousand melodies upon a thousand instruments, it was because a deep desire for knowledge, a passionate ambition for true culture, taught the German poets the way to be German ; indeed, showed them how to preserve the ancient German virtues, whilst creating a new literature,

which should be the glory of Germany. True, the social state of Germany then had little in common with the social state of Ireland now: yet the essential spirit of their movement is ours also. If we considered the causes and conditions of all that is greatest, in the Italian Renaissance, or in the Elizabethan outburst of literary glory, we should find similar facts: the re-discovery of the ancient classic world; the re-discovery of the new world; the thirst for knowledge and experience; a sudden thrill of pride and hope in men's hearts at the thought that Italy, England, their own countries, were rivalling, in their own national ways, the great records of the past;—all this went to the creation of those great arts and literatures. France, too, in her romantic revival of 1830, turned to her own national uses, to uses completely French, whatever in Italy, Germany, England, Spain, she could lay her hands upon. Is Ireland to be the only nation which influences from without are bound to ruin and unnationalize; the only nation incapable of assimilating to herself, of nationalizing and naturalizing the heritage of art and learning left by other nations? It was not so once: not in the early ages of Irish Christianity. If Saint Sedulius, of whom Dr. Sigerson has told us, were alive to-day, he would certainly find critics to call him unpatriotic for taking a foreign metre, and ingrafting upon it Irish graces. As I have pleaded, let us have no coercion in Irish literature: I would add, let us have no protection. Like the Norsemen and the Normans, let all that is good in literature and learning enter Ireland, and become more Irish than the Irish. Even if, like the Norsemen and the Normans, it enters forcibly and against opposition, I am sure that the result will be the same: the Irish genius will captivate the foreign, and grow itself the stronger and more brilliant. You see, I have faith in the Irish genius: I do not believe that anything can so take possession of it, and pervert it, as to drive the nationality out of it. But, perhaps, some [of those like-minded] are thinking



that I am making much ado about nothing all this time. Well! of course, no one [who knows], distrusts the power and indomitable vigour of the Irish genius. But for some time, both in reading Irish papers from all parts of the world, and in discussing Irish matters with Irishmen in England, I have undoubtedly found a certain amiable narrowness, now and then, here and there: a conservatism rather obstinate than strong, less resolute than stubborn. Ask these conservatives to admit some good Irish qualities in this poem or in that novel written within the last twenty years: the answer is: "It's not what I call Irish; give me Mangan, give me Carleton." Now, it is extremely easy to be less great than Mangan and Carleton; it is not impossible to be greater; but to be Mangan, to be Carleton, is a clear impossibility. It is only possible to aim at it by imitating them. Imitation may be the sincerest flattery, but it usually produces the worst literature. In Mangan's day, perhaps, less fervent nationalists wished that Mangan would write like Moore; and perhaps they exhorted Carleton to study the graces of Miss Edgeworth, and the vivacities of Lady Morgan. The really great and imperishable poets who adorned the middle of this century had no such narrowness. We cannot imagine Mangan jealously and anxiously discouraging new ventures of the Irish Muses. We cannot think of Davis laying down absolute laws upon what is, and is not, verily Celtic and truly Irish. Again, it is not the living scholars, most busy in preserving, elucidating, translating, and transmitting to posterity the Gaelic literature of every age and kind, who impose these fetters upon our modern literature. But I have heard some of my countrymen who have no more Gaelic than I, (and I have none), airily and easily blaming a veteran Irish poet, still among us, Mr. de Vere, for having no real Gaelic tone, no insight into the genuine ancient spirit. I should never be surprised to hear Canon O'Hanlon reproached for celebrating the "Land of Leix"

in the Spenserian stanza, one of the few great English forms invented in England, and invented, too, by a very thorough-going enemy of the Irish cause. Again, in projecting some Irish publication, it is surely an open question whether it should be solely and strictly confined to Irish themes, or whether, remembering that

“One in name and in fame  
Are the sea-divided Gaels,”

it should sometimes include matters of collateral interest : contrasts and comparisons, in social and literary concerns, with our kinsmen in Wales and Brittany and Scotland. That, surely, is not opening the floodgates, and admitting cosmopolitan culture to overwhelm Ireland ! yet such proposals have been denounced as unpatriotic. They may be inexpedient, but they can hardly be called criminal. It is this kind of exclusiveness that has emboldened me to protest : it seems to me a fatal interpretation of patriotism. That true son and servant of Ireland, Berkeley, used to make an execrable pun, and to say that he distinguished between patriotism and pat-riotism ; it is the latter quality which produces this feverish alarm lest Irishmen should forget Ireland, if they try to serve her in ways savouring at all, or seeming to savour, of novelty. It is the truer patriotism which refuses to be panic-stricken, though it is willing to be prudent ; a militant faith is one thing, and an irritable fussiness another. I hope there is not an Irishman anywhere, (certainly there cannot be one in the literary societies of Dublin and London), who does not agree with every word of Dr. Douglas Hyde's eloquent appeal upon “the Necessity for de-Anglicizing Ireland” ? But I do not see why Irishmen should not make raids upon other countries, and bring home the spoils, and triumphantly Celticize them, and lay them down at the feet of Ireland. It is pleasant to think that Goldsmith, dedicating his first famous poem, not to his great English friends, not to

Reynolds or to Johnson, but to his poor Irish brother in his poor Irish home,—pleasant to think of him, all through his sorrows and his triumphs, still remembering the old days in Ireland, and hoping to die in the old country.

“And as a hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,  
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew ;  
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,  
Here to return, and die at home at last.”

Horace was right, and his old proverbial wisdom has a good sense as well as a bad : *patriæ quis exul, se quoque fugit : cælum non animum mutant* : we may leave Ireland, but we could not if we would, help being Irish. It is so with our poetry, and with all our fine literature ; there is an Irish foundation, an Irish origin, for it all. Patriotism, said Dr. Johnson, is the last refuge of a scoundrel, and certainly there are many ways of being patriotic, as we have bitter cause to know. But our poetry has been, and is still, patriotic in the best of senses : it has been inspired by our own country in a magnificent variety of ways. It is not now under the discipline of ancient Ireland, the supremacy of bardic colleges ; it were a pity, were it to fall under the authority, and to be checked by the iron rod, of an unsympathetic criticism, and by the narrow spirit of a limited outlook. It may be that Irish poetry is in a state of change, losing, perhaps, some virtues, but gaining others ; displaying in fresh forms, under new aspects, the glory and the beauty, the deeds and the dreams, the legend and the history, of our country. Consider the fortunes of that marvellous cycle of epic and romance, which belongs to Wales, Scotland, Cornwall, Brittany, and Ireland : the story of King Arthur and his knights. Malory in England first cast it into a comparatively modern English form, in his superb prose ; Milton and Dryden both intended to write epics upon it, and unhappily did not ; Sir Richard Blackmore, worst of English poets, unhappily did : English

poetry abounds in references to it ; in our own day, five English poets, three of them partly Celtic, Tennyson, Arnold, Hawker of Morwenstow, Mr. Swinburne, and Mr. William Morris, have treated it in manifold ways, with an extraordinary diversity of styles ; but they have not modernized and spoilt it out of all recognition. Each in his way, with a different ethical and artistic aim, has paid homage to the enduring beauty, the enduring grandeur, of the ancient Celtic story. They have been utterly unable, by any Saxon perversity, to de-Celticize it ; nor can the magnificent stories of our own country be robbed of their inherent Irish character, by any variety of treatment at the hands of Irish poets. But there is always a spirit of protest against literary changes. "This will never do !" cried the leading critic of the day, upon reading Wordsworth ; Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, had plenty of scorn and discouragement to face. And the cry is always : "You are affected, you are effeminate, you are obscure, you are not like the good old poets of our childhood, you are running after false models, you are rejecting the traditions of our literature." The wheel goes slowly round : and the despised and ridiculed young innovators become classics, and find burial in Westminster Abbey. It need not be otherwise in Ireland. Where we clearly recognise excellence, it is rash to remonstrate with it for not being precisely our kind of excellence. Any clear and definite rejection of Irish aims and interests speaks for itself. Any poet who sees no greatness and no beauty in Irish legend and history, from the beginning of the world up to to-day, could we imagine so blind a fool, condemns himself, and may write Anglo-Saxon epics for the English ; but from the beginning of the world, (and that is the only safe patriotic date for the beginning of Irish history), up to to-day, is a vast period, within which there is room for an infinite variety of themes, and moods, and manners. We are almost past the age in which Irishmen could disdain the

Irish language, laugh at the Irish legends, and devote themselves entirely to English literature. If there be any vitality at all in the Irish literary endeavours of to-day, it lies in their freedom from that spirit of ignorant contempt, and in their determination to cherish our rich inheritance.

But at this point let me illustrate part of what I mean, in saying that a certain change may be in course of progress in our poetry: for example, in one small point of rhythmical and metrical matters. In reading much Irish poetry of this century, we note the great amount of it that is written in swinging measures, anapæsts and dactyls; verse that gallops and leaps along; measures adapted or copied, in some cases, from the Gaelic. Now, since Gaelic and English are not the same language, the same or similar metres have a different effect in each language: as, in a most familiar case, that of the Greek and the Latin hexameter. Being, to my shame and sorrow, ignorant of Gaelic, I can only judge, by hearing them read, the effect of certain Gaelic metres; and that, of course, imperfectly: but the effect seems very different in the Gaelic and in the English. It may well be that the metre is now statelier, now softer, in the Gaelic than in the English, not to mention the absence in the English of much artful and elaborate assonance, alliteration, and kindred delicacies. Irishmen can partly reproduce Irish turns of expression in English, and give to the English language a certain Irish charm, but they cannot change its inherent character. Now, it is unquestionable that the loveliest English verse, the most stately, musical, and sweet, has not been written in these rapid measures. From Chaucer to Tennyson, it has been mainly written in iambic and trochaic metres. Even the metrical accomplishments of Shelley, or of Coleridge, or of Mr. Swinburne, have not been able to give to the rapid swinging measures the dignity or charm of the others. Nor can Irish writers convey to them a dignity or charm which in English they are incapable of receiving.

But in some cases, it may be, through Gaelic associations ; in other cases, because these measures are excellent for popular purposes ; our writers have been fond of them, and from Moore onwards, have often turned them to admirable account. But compare them with the grander measures : take the first lines of Mangan's " Lament for the Knight of Kerry " :

" There was lifted up one voice of woe,  
One lament of more than mortal grief,  
Through the wide South to and fro,  
For a fallen chief."

Now take the first lines from his " Dream of John MacDonnell " :

" I lay in unrest ; old thoughts of pain,  
That I struggled in vain to smother,  
Like midnight spectres haunted my brain ;  
Dark fantasies chased each other."

As mere sound, it is incomparably inferior. Or take the first lines from a poem by D'Arcy McGee :

" Long, long ago, beyond the misty space  
Of twice a thousand years,  
In Erin old there dwelt a mighty race,  
Taller than Roman spears."

Now take the first lines from a poem by Florence MacCarthy :

" Come, Liberty, come ! we are ripe for thy coming ;  
Come, freshen the hearts where thy rival has trod ;  
Come, richest and rarest ! come, fiercest and fairest !  
Come, daughter of science ! come, gift of the god ! "

One could dance to it, and it would be splendid to sing ; but it cannot compare in beauty with the other rhythm. One would be exhilarating on a cracked fiddle or a banjo ; the other has the majesty of a cathedral organ. Two

more examples from Mangan : first, from the " Lament for the Princes " :

" O woman of the piercing wail,  
Who mournest o'er yon mound of clay  
With sigh and groan,  
Would God thou wert among the Gael !  
Thou wouldst not then from day to day  
Weep thus alone."

Now some lines from " Rury and Dervorgilla " :

" Know ye the tale of the Prince of Oriel,  
Of Rury, last of his line of kings ?  
I pen it here as a sad memorial,  
Of how much woe reckless folly brings."

Again, the difference in dignity and charm is very great, but the swinging measures, in a vast variety, have been endeared and consecrated by a thousand associations with songs, and dances, and spirited ballads : and very delightful they can be. But if a living poet choose to leave them alone, and to concentrate his mind and ear upon the less rhetorical, and more delicate or stately rhythms, and in all his metrical work to aim at conveying into English verse something of a Celtic effect, by paying to the capacities of English verse such attention as the old Gaelic poets might have paid, were they living and writing in English now,—why, he may promptly be asked, where is his Irish spirit, and whether he thinks himself superior to the good old Irish rhythms ? But alas ! we have lost our own language, and English is not at all the same thing : we can, and we do, Irishize it to a great extent, as by the use of Gaelic turns of speech ; and a most beautiful thing that Irish English often is from the tongues and pens of our orators and of our writers. But there are limits to our possibilities in this direction : there are scarce any limits to our possibilities in the direction of introducing beauties and graces into English verse, which in spirit and effect

shall be truly Irish. To mention no living writers, Walsh and Callanan, Sir Samuel Ferguson and Allingham, have done so with wonderful felicity : and the greatest Young Ireland poets, whatever certain of their admirers may think, were of course admirable artists, in spite of that passionate sincerity and ardent purpose which some critics hold incompatible with a deliberate attention to art. It would be a characteristically Celtic achievement, were Irish poets to bring English verse to a perfection of music finer of its kind, in some ways, than anything yet achieved in England : as Mangan himself has done in his poem of unspeakable beauty : the "Ode to The Maguire."

There is room for all : that is the sum and substance of what I have tried to say : that, and Let us bear with all, encourage all, and do our best to believe in all. But I never heard that a difference of literary opinion was a mortal sin, on one side or the other. It would be pleasant if we could persuade ourselves that a man may write, read, say, and do all manner of things uncongenial to us, yet have quite as much patriotism, and as much Irish spirit, and as many "Celtic notes," as ourselves. One would think, to hear some querulous criticism, that, as a rule, the ancient Irish, our ancestors, were a desperately monotonous race, all precisely similar ; and when we read of their conflicts, we are tempted to wonder whether this champion fought that champion for lacking the Celtic note, and for not being exactly like himself. They were Celtic, they were the Gael ; but they must have had, like every flourishing race under the sun, endless diversities of character, though but one spirit. It would be a dreary world if we were all facsimiles of each other. But when we differ, let us, if it be possible, agree to differ, and not see treason and heresy against true patriotism in every deviation from our own tastes. Our ancestors, in some parts, used to leave the right arms of their sons unchristened ; or rather, since that is theologically meaningless, they thought they



could leave them unchristened : to the intent, as the English martyr, Father Campion, puts it, that they "might give a more ungracious and deadly blow." But the right arm armed with the pen can be dangerous ; and from its ungracious and deadly blows, now and then, it would seem that the parents of some of our critics had successfully practised the old superstition. Righteous anger and patriotic indignation should be kept for proper occasions : there are quite enough of them without inventing more. Let our poets take their own way, and choose their own music ; more than one melody can be played upon the Irish harp, and the more the better. We have but the right to ask them, that whatever they do, they do it with all their might ; with all the patience, all the passion, that the thought of serving Ireland through song can give them. They are preparing the way for the triumph-song that the poets of a day to come will chaunt, with every splendour, every richness, every loveliness and grace that Irish music has ever known. Remember how Saint Patrick preached before the high King Leaghair, and his court at Tara. There sat the great King, his court and his warriors round him, with anger in their eyes. But, as Saint Patrick spoke, a wonder happened : the tide ceased to ebb, the white deer forgot to drink by the river, the eagles hung poised in the air, the green leaves left off rustling, and a mystical, sacred silence fell upon Ireland. We want a silence to fall upon Ireland, a silence from lamentation and from conflict : and then, in that happy dawn, the only voices will be voices of the Irish Muses, reigning in their old home ; and the voices of the Irish people, speaking peace and goodwill through all our loved and holy Ireland.

## THE INIMITABLE LUCIAN

[*The Daily Chronicle*, February 20, 1900.]

THE Syrian Pantagruelist: so, in some of his happiest lines, has Mr. Andrew Lang described Lucian of Samosata by Euphrates:—

“The sage who laughed the world away,  
Who mocked at gods, and men, and care,  
More sweet of voice than Rabelais,  
And lighter-hearted than Voltaire.”

Yes: that is a true Lucian, the man of inveterate laughter and vivid imagination and radiant style; “the inimitable Lucian,” as Gibbon calls him, who has been so often imitated, and so often in vain. It is the Lucian whose best writings ripple and sparkle with an “*anerithmon gelasma*,” who has affinities with the nobler Erasmus and with his late-born brother Heine; who had a romantic soul and an ironic brain. But there is another Lucian, and we find him in Colonel Hime’s most scholarly and interesting monograph.

This is Lucian the nihilist of faith, the anarchist of thought; “scoffing” Lucian, as Burton loves to say; the Lucian whom Bacon calls “perhaps” a “contemplative atheist.” It is the Lucian whose “Dialogues of the Dead” amused the placid death-bed of Hume, and led him, as Adam Smith relates, to crack jokes upon Styx and Charon. Whereat Wesley’s wrath was kindled, and from the pulpit he thundered at the dead sceptic thus:—

“Do you now find it a laughing matter? What think you now of Charon? Has he ferried you over Styx? At length he has taught you to know a little of your own heart! At length you know it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!”

This jesting Lucian does not so much as comprehend the meaning of the words reverence and awe; he will “peep and botanise upon his mother’s grave”; he has no

reserves of silence, no secret sanctities that he respects ; no precept higher than the Rabelaisian "Do as you please." He lightly lashes the ignoble and exposes the absurd ; but his sense of humour is solely responsible for that, and he has no moral indignation. His deepest sentiments are his impatience of imposture and hypocrisy ; and his feelings of the nothingness in things, the shadow of death upon life, the overwhelming reality of the grave. Before "commencing satirist," he had gone the round, none too methodically, of the philosophies, and looked, none too carefully, at the religions ; he found everywhere vanity and vexation, impossibility and pretence. And his conclusion was much that of his admirer Hume. That amiable infidel, when the eternal questions pressed him hard and molested his equanimity, had the following lofty consolations :—

"Most fortunate it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling those clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends ; and when after three or four hours' amusement I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold and strained and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther. Here, then, I find myself absolutely and necessarily determined to live, and talk, and act like other people in the common affairs of life."

Now, the second century after Christ, notwithstanding that it embraces the vaunted Age of the Antonines, was not distinguished by elevation of pagan thought, pagan faith, or pagan practice ; and Lucian, the self-naturalised Greek with an Asiatic temperament, was not the man to discern its nobler aspects. He encountered Christianity, and, though really complimenting, meant to travesty it ; little wonder that the pompous assumptions of pagan philosophy, the decadent superstitions of pagan religion, found no mercy at his hands ! Your *Græculus philosophicus* had long been an Egyptian plague upon the civilised world. In the

previous century, so Philostratus writes, the Indian King Phraotes remarked to Apollonius of Tyana—if that amusing person be not mythical,—that in old time the obvious question first put to a stranger was: “Are you a pirate?” Now, with Greeks at least, it was: “Are you a philosopher?” And the necromancer, the soothsayer, the “spiritualist,” were ubiquitous. Lucian, shallow as he was (“all shallows are clear,” said Johnson of Hume), was briskly logical and of a sprightly common-sense; the arrant humbug or solemn ass had no chance with him.

With this, the caustically destructive work of Lucian, we have no quarrel: with human folly, war to the knife, if you will! But one thought must occur to the readers of Lucian: he had for years, as liege lord, another Greek writer, the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. That Stoic saint wrote Greek as gracelessly as Lucian wrote it gracefully; it was the native tongue of neither. But the Emperor, Plato’s philosopher in the purple, lived his austere faith faithfully; whilst Lucian “mocked at gods, and men, and care.” We laugh with him; we praise his exposure of the rottenness and sham and ludicrousness in the various life of his times; we love his spirit of romantic invention; we linger gladly in his Isles of the Blessed; we take sides with his Men of the Moon on Men of the Sun; we object, or do not object, to annexing and colonising the Morning Star; but we have no room in our hearts for the man who, after degrading Homer, and blaspheming Socrates, and making a mocking show of “whatever gods may be,” thrusts in our faces a grinning skull; as much as to say: “That will be the end of you! Make the best of life while you have it.” If only his own heart had felt the *sæva indignatio* which “lacerated” Swift’s; if only he had lain upon the “mattress grave” of Heine! Then, we could pardon his elegant pessimism.

But the prosperous provincial, so it seems, had no sorrows; and such a man, however delightful, is an essential

trifler. A great writer, who, but for a certain somewhat nauseous unction, is very like Lucian, has called him "the first apparition of that form of human genius whereof Voltaire is the complete incarnation." Renan has said it; and he is an admirable judge. Mr. Pater, who so cunningly built into the structure of his "Marius" what is perhaps the most impressive of Lucian's semi-serious works, the "Hermotimus," speaks of his "elegant and self-complacent, but far from unamiable scepticism. . . ." Just so; and as Newman, in a famous utterance, told the University of Oxford that he wished religion in England were more rigid, gloomy, piercing, even superstitious, so at least it ceased to be so easy-going, light, unthinking, superficial; in the same way we resent the facial agnosticism of our pleasant Lucian. True, the imperishable Plato himself, with other philosophers of less note, had abhorred and denounced the dishonouring legends of their Pantheon: true again, that many of the Christian Fathers and apologists loved to pour scathing scorn upon them. But all these had a substitute for what they destroyed. Lucian tumbles the gods from their thrones, jeers sweetly at their preposterous appearance, draws his official salary, and retires chuckling. If he have anything to say, it is the Lucretian *Quantum est in rebus inane!*

Doubtless we cannot blame him for his seeming indifference to the everlasting problems of humanity. The man was strangely made so. But we are equally unable to love him, as we love Cervantes and Montaigne, Browne and Lamb. He feasts us bravely, but he puts the festival skeleton too near us: his dance-music turns to a death-march. The "Dialogues of the Dead," which, for some inscrutable reason, are the most familiar of his writings, are dolorously humorous. Consider but one, in a poor epitome. Scene, Hades. Speakers, Menippus and Hermes.

MENIPPUS: Where, Hermes, are the gallants and fair dames? I am a newcomer: tell me.

HERMES: I am not at leisure: but look on your right. There are

Hyacinth, and Narcissus, and Nireus, and Achilles, and Tyro, and Helen; in short, all the beauty of old time.

MENIPPUS : I see but bones and fleshless skulls.

HERMES : And these bones, which you seem to despise, are what the poets marvel at.

MENIPPUS : Show me Helen.

HERMES : This skull is Helen.

MENIPPUS : Was it this that filled a thousand ships, and overthrew so many cities ?

HERMES : You never saw her living, Menippus ! or you would have known what it was "for such a lady to endure such toils." Withered flowers, colourless and misshapen, they are nothing to you. But, in their bloom, they were very beautiful.

MENIPPUS : But the Greeks, Hermes : they fought for a thing of a minute, so soon to fade !

HERMES : I have no time, Menippus, to philosophise with you. Lay yourself down where you please : I have other dead to bring across.

An excellent grimness, surely, in this mingled anticipation of Faustus and Hamlet; a savoury cynicism; a choice laugh at poor, heroic, foolish humanity. "I should burst out laughing at you," says a dead youth to his mourning folk and friends, "but for this dreadful thing you've tied round my chin." Well may one of the most eminent among American scholars, who has written upon Lucian with an appropriate air of cultured levity, declare that "of all sad writers the jester Lucian is to us the saddest : sadder even than the elder Pliny, in his blank despair." He is the priest and prophet of immitigable, perdurable death; amid the dust and ashes of his thought you shall search in vain for any human hope.

We cannot make friends with this man of mockeries. Mr. Lang can; he addresses him, much as Wordsworth invoked Milton, with a "Lucian ! thou should'st be living at this hour; the world hath need of thee." But we think that Colonel Hime writes with a deeper insight upon this Lucian of "the many laughter." In his hundred pages he does justice to the bright phantasy, the swift, keen irony and wit of this unique writer of old time; but we are too often

compelled to say with him: "This is awful mirth to our ears." To tilt at superstition, to shoot at folly, is seldom a grateful or a gratifying pursuit, if there be no depth of purpose in it, nothing but pleasure in the consciousness of destructive power, no feeling of sympathetic pity, no tenderness somewhere in the heart, no cordiality sweetening the work of overthrow.

Lucretius, by far the most terrible and prostrating of ancient writers, is more humanly companionable than the corruscating scoffer. Or, again, it is not possible to read *Don Quixote* without the profoundest emotion of reverence and compassion, mingling with the constant laughter; Lucian is soulless, glittering without, ashen within. A French priest and writer of *pensées* has said that, since Voltaire, the world no longer laughs: it grins. It may seem a harsh thing to say of Lucian the witty, the elegant, the debonair; but there is no humanity in his laugh, his smile is a grin at an empty universe essentially absurd, if capable of being enjoyed. Colonel Hime is sternly and strictly in the right. Lucian is delightful, but not lovable; admirable, but not honourable. Still, if there be readers who can make honestly merry over the gospel of *Tout lasse, tout casse, tout passe*, we commend them to Lucian of Samosata. But Steele and Lamb are much more wholesome, and we prefer the *que sais-je* of Montaigne.

## LORD BYRON

[*The Academy*, May 7, 1898.]

THE Byron of tradition is a fascinating figure. He flashes through his brief life with a disastrous glory; he is passion incarnate; he is a noble, a man of ancient and illustrious descent, and he flings poems broadcast in a golden largesse; he is the Napoleon of passion and of poetry, adored, dreaded, reviled, extolled; he is an Apollo-Apollon, beautiful

and satanic ; he is the spirit of revolt, freedom, unfettered manhood ; like Browning's Ottima, he is " magnificent in sin " ; he is Milton's ruined archangel, fallen from Heaven, and keeping something of his pristine splendour ; he is the man of inevitable genius, who loves to be himself, and to mock into oblivion and contempt all spurious and puling respectability ; he is the Titan, the Prometheus, who filches fire from Heaven or from Hell ; Europe is aghast at him, and he dies heroically at Missolonghi. And " Byronism " becomes a contagion : from Moscow to Madrid, whole armies of young men fall to drinking out of skulls, to writing cut-throat or indecent tragedies, to loving Alps and ruins and bandits and the East and the Middle Age and their neighbours' wives. He is a portent and an epoch : the Revolution was one mighty thing, and the existence of " Milor " Byron was another. " That pale face is my fate," said an unhappy girl, upon catching sight of Byron : " that pale face " possessed, obsessed all Europe. It lengthened the hair and shortened the collar : it created " Byronism," and enriched all civilized tongues with the epithet " Byronic." A beautiful devil of supreme genius,—that is the Byron of tradition. Supremacy in genius, vice, personality,—they are all ascribed to the Byron of tradition. Infamous, perhaps : but, what a poet, what a man !

So much for the Byron of tradition. And the Byron of fact ? " Well," said Mr. Stevenson's Attwater to Captain Davis, " you seem to me to be a very twopenny pirate ! " And to me, Byron with all his pretensions and his fame seems a very twopenny poet and a farthing man. " He had the misfortune," writes Mr. Symonds, " to be well-born and ill-bred," a most deplorable combination ! His letters alone reveal the man ; a man of malignant dishonour and declamatory affectation, and poetising conceit ; a man who could not even act upon Luther's advice and " sin boldly," but must needs advertise his silly obscenities. Despicable, that is the word for him : and it is no Philistine Puritanism



that so speaks. The vulgar aristocrat, the insolent plebeian, that Byron was, looks ludicrous by the side of his great contemporaries. Wordsworth, so impassioned, awful, and august; Shelley and Keats; Lamb, the well-beloved, that tragic and smiling patient; miraculous Coleridge; Landor, with his gracious courtesy and Roman wrath;—how does Byron show by these? He did one thing well: he rid the world of a cad—by dying as a soldier. There was a strain of greatness in the man, and it predominated at the last.

But Byron the poet? Emphatically, he was not a poet; not if Shakespeare and Milton are poets. He was a magnificent satirist: the "Vision of Judgment," "Don Juan," and "Beppo" are very glories of wit, indignation, rhetoric; accomplished to the uttermost, marvellous and immortal; filled with scathing laughter, rich with a prodigal profusion of audacious fancy and a riot of rhyme. Here the man is himself, eloquent and vehement of speech, alive and afire. No coarseness, cruelty, insolence, can blind us to the enduring excellence of these writings, to their virility and strength. *This* Byron is deathless. But the Byron of love-lyrics, and tragedies, and romantic tales, is a poet of infinite tediousness in execrable verse; in the severely courteous French phrase, he "does not permit himself to be read." And he is not read: no one now reads "Lara," or "Parisina," or "The Corsair," or "The Giaour," or "The Bride of Abydos," or "The Siege of Corinth," or "The Island," or the weary, weary plays. They are dead, and past resurrection; their passion is as poor and tawdry a thing as that of *Frankenstein*, or *The Mysteries of Udolpho*; their garish theatricality is laughable, and we can scarce believe that these things of naught were once preferred to the noble simplicities and rough, true music of Scott. Among the poems of farewell, regret, despair, is there one, except, it may be, "When we two parted," that can be read with more than a mild and languid pleasure? In all the moralisings and meanderings and maunderings of "Childe

Harold," is there anything better than a few bursts or sounding rhetoric and impressive declamation, superbly and masterfully trivial? Dulness is the word, dulness unspeakable. Outside his own royal province of satire, he created nothing of power, nothing but frantic efforts to be powerful; and he turned the lovely speech of English poetry into a hideous noise. Coleridge, master of music, says of him: "It seems to my ear, that there is a sad want of harmony in Lord Byron's verses"; and again: "How lamentably the *art* of versification is neglected by most of the poets of the present day! By Lord Byron, as it strikes me, in particular." In our times, Mr. Swinburne, to whom none will deny a mastery of his craft, has poured upon Byron's inharmonies the contempt, not of parody,—that were impossible,—but of faithful imitation. Consider an average example of his rhythm from "Cain":—

"Oh, thou beautiful  
 And unimaginable ether! and  
 Ye multiplying masses of increased  
 And still increasing lights! What are ye? What  
 Is this blue wilderness of interminable  
 Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen  
 The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?  
 Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye  
 Sweep on in your unbounded revelry  
 Through an aerial universe of endless  
 Expansion—at which my soul aches to think—  
 Intoxicated with eternity?  
 O God! O Gods! or whatso'er ye are,  
 How beautiful ye are! how beautiful  
 Your works, or accidents, or whatso'er  
 They may be! Let me die, as atoms die  
 (If that they die), or know ye in your might  
 And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour  
 Unworthy what I see, though my dust is.  
 Spirit! let me expire, or see them nearer."

Musical, is it not? Let us try again; a passage from "Sardanapalus":

“Yon disk,  
To the star-read Chaldean, bears upon  
Its everlasting page the end of what  
Seemed everlasting! But oh! thou true sun,  
The burning oracle of all that live,  
As fountain of all life, and symbol of  
Him who bestows it, wherefore dost thou limit  
Thy love unto calamity? Why not  
Unfold the rise of days more worthy thine  
All-glorious burst from ocean? Why not dart  
A beam of hope athwart the future years,  
As of wrath to its days! Hear me! oh, hear me!”

Such is Byron's "mighty line": this horrid dissonance, this gasping and croaking, is the breath of his fiery spirit expressing itself in poetry and passion. "Moore," said Sir Henry Taylor, "makes Byron as interesting as one whose nature was essentially ignoble can be." And "essentially ignoble" is the very term for Byron's verse; it lacks every fine quality, from the majesty of Milton to the polish of Pope. Many a poet whose matter is tedious and outworn can be read for the redeeming excellence of his manner; Byron is not of these.

But Byron was accepted abroad: he enfranchised English literature, he was the genius of English poetry incarnate before the eyes of Europe, he moved the aged Goethe and the youthful Hugo. Why? Surely for a simple reason; Byron is very easy to understand. He deals rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being "at war with society": an aristocrat in exile, a champion of the peoples. Now, rhetoric and oratory and eloquence make a wide appeal; they are seldom subtle, but they address themselves with pungent and poignant vigour to the simple feelings of men. "Give me liberty or give me death!"—that is the kind of thing; a sonorous and impassioned commonplace, flung out upon the air to thrill the hearts of thousands. Byron's best verse has this quality: he possessed the imagination of the orator, the faculty of

finding large and bold phrases. Stanza upon stanza of "Childe Harold" reads like the finest things in Irish or American oratory, grandiose and sweeping. "Roll on, thou deep and dark-blue ocean, roll!" You can see the outstretched arm, hear the resonant voice, of Byron the declaimer; and the effect upon ears unversed in the niceties and delicacies of English poetry was prodigious. The blaring magniloquence of Lucan has certain attractions not possessed by the majestic, melancholy, subtle Virgilian lines; and Byron was much of a Lucan. "The Isles of Greece," and the "Ode to Napoleon," and "Lines on Completing My Thirty-sixth Year,"—emphatic, strenuous, impressive,—have the true oratorical note and ring:

"The sword, the banner, and the field,  
 Glory and Greece, around me see!  
 The Spartan, borne upon his shield,  
 Was not more free."

There is a trumpet-call in that; but for greatness of beauty we turn from it to the last chorus of Shelley's "Hellas," and hear a music of the morning stars. Byron could shout magnificently, laugh splendidly, thunder tumultuously; but he could not sing. There was something in him of Achilles, nothing whatever of Apollo. Think only of these mighty masters of passion, Æschylus, Lucretius, Dante, Milton, Hugo; what sweetness proceeding from what strength! They are filled with a lyrical loveliness, the very magic of music, the beauty almost unbearable. By the side of these Byron is but a brazen noise. His *sæva indignatio* becomes a mere petulance of arrogance when we think of Dante; one line of Milton rebukes his haste of speed. He took Europe by storm; but a far more impassioned figure is that of Wordsworth, with his whole being, body and soul, shaken by the "divine madness" of inspiration, by converse with eternity, by commune with "the most ancient heavens." *There* was the true passion, not in Byron, hurriedly throwing

off a few hundred lines of romantic rant after coming home from some silly dissipation. He has no trace of the poet consecrate, such as marks many a nameless balladist. Who would not have written "Helen of Kirkconnel," so fierce and loving, desolate and defiant, a cry imperishable and perfect, than all the famed rigmarole of rhetoric called "Childe Harold"? In that long and elaborate work there are precisely two lines of pure poetry, the lines on the Dying Gladiator :

"He heard it, but he heeded not : his eyes  
Were with his heart, and that was far away."

That, and perhaps a score of other lines in Byron, have an enduring freshness and fragrance of thought and word. For the rest, he was pleased in poetry, as in life, to "cut a dash," with the result that both his verse and himself are sorrily discredited : things, as George Borrow has it, of "mouthings and coxcombrty." Landor, in stately Latin, once exhorted him to amend his morals and his style. He did neither, and his style remained even more detestable than his morals. When Tennyson heard of Byron's death, he went out upon the seashore and wrote upon the sand the words : "Byron is dead !" Seas of oblivion have swept over Byron, and washed away his fame, as the sea washed away those words. It may be that his most celebrated passage will be remembered only by the scornful ridicule of Browning. The poets whom he insulted or patronised, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and Shelley and Keats, have long since taken their starry stations in altitudes beyond sight of him, and Byron, "The Claimant" of English poetry, has been found out. He retains but one glory : his gift of wit and satire, his superb recklessness of mocking phrase and rhyme. There, all that was potent and sincere in him became triumphant, and the writer of "Don Juan" is a deathless delight. But the "poet of passion" is dead. Peacock killed him long

ago in "Nightmare Abbey." His wailings and howlings wring no man's heart, stir no man's pulses; we no longer believe in the Byron of dazzling devilry and burning poetry, volcanic and voluptuous. In place of him we contemplate an ill-mannered and cross-grained fellow, charlatan and genius, whose voluminous writings are mostly dull and mostly ill-written; gone for ever, that Byron of the fatal fascination, the passionate and patrician glory, whose freaks and whimsies threw Europe into fits, whose poems revealed to the universe the fact that Shakespeare's England had at last produced a poet! If he could be resuscitated, Mr. Murray as publisher, and Mr. Coleridge as editor, are the men to accomplish that miracle. But, as Mr. Matthew Arnold loved to inform us, "miracles do not happen." Byron the wit is alive for evermore; Byron the poet of passion and imagination will never rise from the dead.

## O RARE GEORGE BORROW!

[*The Outlook*, April 1st, 1899.]

You may prefer Popish priests to Protestant pugilists; you may loathe philology and ale; you may feel for the tragic house of Stuart; you may take no personal interest in East Anglia, Wales, or Spain, and but little in gypsies: yet, if by natural grace you have it in you to love Borrow's genius, you can forgive him all. By natural grace, I say: for if you come fresh to Borrow, as to a writer whom you "ought to know," and find his charm hard of access, difficult of approach, you will never reach it; you will think him an over-praised eccentric. But they, to whom life, in the natural order, can give nothing better than to walk alone in "the wind on the heath," and to lie out on the hillside under the stars; to know that strange false dawn whereat all nature wakes, and turns to sleep again; to go on their rejoicing way at sunrise, loving their fre

solitariness:—these are the born Borrowians. The appeal is elemental, primæval; to the savage in the blood, the ancestral nomad: wonderful as they are, not Borrow's dealings with men, not his trafficking with Spanish *posadas* and Welsh cottages and gypsy camps, not his converse with his kind in town or country, but his intercourse and converse with Nature at her untameable wildest, mark what is deepest in his heart, most leaping in his pulses. It is the voice of Jasper Petulengro, but the soul of George Borrow, which praises in a famous dialogue the simple majesties of the means of natural joy in living. "‘Life is sweet, brother.’ ‘Do you think so?’ ‘Think so!—there’s night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, and stars, brother, all sweet things; there’s likewise a wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?’ . . . ‘In sickness, Jasper?’ ‘There’s the sun and stars, brother.’ ‘In blindness, Jasper?’ ‘There’s the wind on the heath, brother.’ . . .” Does not that send the blood glowing through the veins to read? And that is the finer spirit of the four masterpieces: *The Bible in Spain*, *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, *Wild Wales*; to read which is to wash soul and body in the open air, to be purified from the stains of civilization, to meet and greet the Mighty Mother. O rare George Borrow! Yet readers new to Borrow might well say to him what Plato would have had his ideal citizens say to the poet: “You are a very wonderful, and accomplished, and extraordinary person; but we don’t think we want any more of you.”

. . . . Six foot three, a mighty walker and rider, a vigorous eater and drinker; of stout and valiant fists, a “good hater” and a plain-spoken; a lover of rude livers and wild adventures; master of a style that moves and breathes, a man arrogant and chivalrous and masculine;—such is “Don Jorge” of Spain, the “Romany Rye” of English waysides and heaths and dingles. A very Tristram, child of sorrow; a man a prey to “the Fear,” a man of causeless

melancholy ; shy, uncertain, solitary, superstitious ; with the Mezzofantian gift of tongues, and a passion for literary triumph ; shrinking from men of letters, and jealous of them ; a willing pupil of the obscure and the eccentric and the despised : that is the Distributor of the Scriptures for the Bible Society in Russia and Spain, who execrated Rome, extolled Canterbury, and had, after all, a faith and a doubt of his own. A master of pathos, of humour, of truest realism, yet less of romantic passion than of a most intense personal absorption in himself, as a man in a world of wonder ; one who paraded a robust common-sense, but whom the conventional repelled, the remote and mysterious attracted. A strange nature of a man ! as Mr. Stevenson would say ; but a sincere nature, and a man, if unlike his fellows, then born to the unlikeness, and incapable of conformity. The prince of innocent egoists and childlike braggarts, who to the last could contemplate his secret soul with a marvelling concern, as though from without, and describe his bursts of tears not less vividly than his draughts of ale. He imagined nothing ; but what he saw, did, said, or heard, that he embellished,—not by adding embroideries, but by curtailing superfluities, and leaving a clean, clear, and instantly arresting outline. And he took pains to avoid dulness ; do he but ask his way of a tinker, or order his meal at an inn, or set to upon learning Irish, he will take care that the event shall be emphatic, a matter of pointed interest. Uncongenial critics have cried out upon this, not understanding it ; they have either failed to note the elasticity and terseness of the realism, or they have paid it an unconscious compliment. His “ Bible in Spain ” is the most marked example of his manner. His other masterpieces are frankly personal ; but there he chronicles a public mission, and his title indicates it. Yet his readers observe (and some of them with a peculiar amusement), that the Bible is far less the book’s theme than are Borrow and his night-rides, and his remarkable



servants, and his food and his gypsies, and himself and his, in general and at large. George Borrow is always his own protagonist, be it the Borrow knowing in beer and horseflesh, or the Borrow charging the Pope full tilt, or the Borrow helpless and agonising in the hold of the mysterious "Fear": Borrow of the *gemiti, sospiri, ed alti guai*.

. . . . All his books are in great measure autobiographical ; all, therefore, records of wanderings, even from infancy ; all are written in an English which attains its dramatic end with an amazing certainty and success. It is an unerring combination of the homely and the eloquent, the homespun and the high-wrought ; the words are living creatures. Mr. Meredith, Mr. Pater, Mr. Stevenson grew into their styles, finding their way. Borrow seems to have come into the world with his proper gift of style, so indissolubly wedded to his nature, so inseparable from his themes. These goodly books are among the most wayward ever written. You cannot answer a curious friend who asks : "What is *Lavengro* about?" You can but say : "Gypsies, and obscure languages, and London publishers, and tinkers, and mad people, and an applewoman, and Salisbury Plain, and an Armenian, and a Welshman who thought himself guilty of the *pechod Yspryd Glân*." Whereat dissatisfaction upon the part of your friend. But what the four books mean and are to their lovers is upon this sort. Written by a man of intense personality, irresistible in his hold upon your attention, they take you far afield from weary cares and business into the enamouring airs of the open world, and into days when the countryside was uncontaminated by the vulgar conventions which form the worst side of "civilized" life in cities. They give you the sense of emancipation, of manumission into the liberty of the winding road and fragrant forest, into the freshness of an ancient country-life, into a *milieu* where men are not copies of each other. And you fall in with strange scenes

of adventure, great or small, of which a strange man is the centre as he is the scribe; and from a description of a lonely glen you are plunged into a dissertation upon difficult old tongues, and from dejection into laughter, and from gypsydom into journalism; and everything is equally delightful, and nothing that the strange man shows you can come amiss. And you will hardly make up your mind whether he is most Don Quixote, or Rousseau, or Luther, or Defoe; but you will always love these books by a brave man who travelled in far lands, travelled far in his own land, travelled the way of life for close upon eighty years, and died in perfect solitude. And this will be the least you can say, though he would not have you say it: *Requiescat in pace viator.*

## OCTAVIUS PULLEYN

[*The Speaker*, May 7, 1898.]

If more may be known of Octavius Pulleyn, I know not: but I know that, toward the close of the seventeenth century, curious and winning century, he wrote these lines:—

### I.

“ Within the haunted thicket, where  
 The feathered Choristers are met to play;  
 And celebrate with voices clear,  
 And accents sweet, the praise of *May*;  
 The *Ouzel*, *Thrush*, and speckled *Lark*,  
 And *Philomel*, that loves the *dawn* and *dark*:  
 These (*the inspired throng*)  
 Adorn their *noble Theme* with an immortal *Song*,  
 While Woods, and Vaults, the Brook and neighbouring  
*Hill*,  
 Repeat the varied close, and the melodious *Trill*.

### II.

‘ Here feast your *Ears*, but let your *Eye*  
 Wander, and see one of the lesser frie  
 Under a leaf, or on a dancing twig  
 Ruffle his *painted feathers*, and look big,

Pirk up his tayle, and hop between  
 The boughs, *by moving only to be seen* ;  
 Perhaps his *troubled breast* he *prunes*  
 As he doth *meditate* on his *tunes* ;  
 At last (compos'd) his little head he rears,  
 Towards what he strives to imitate, the Sphears ;  
 And chirping then begins his best,  
 Falls on to *Pipe among the rest* ;  
 Deeming that *all's not worth a rush*  
 Without his *Whistle from the bush*."

Excellent! It is the opening of a "Pindariq' Ode" addressed "To My Dear Friend Mr. Thomas Flatman. Upon the Publication of his Poems." Mr. Thomas Flatman, poet, painter and lawyer, had his rare felicities in verse. Pope, that splendid thief, disdained not to take from him. In especial, he enjoyed a sad and solemn way with the mortuary music ; also, a pleasing vein of humour, as when he wrote his bit of mordant banter "To Mr. Sam Austin of Wadham Coll: Oxon, On his most unintelligible Poems": concluding with

"The Beetles of our Rhimes shall drive full fast in  
 The wedges of your worth to everlasting,  
 My Much *Apocalyptiq'* friend *Sam. Austin*."

But Thomas is poor and pale beside his Pindariq' friend, Octavius of the singing lips and seeing eyes. *Nominis umbra*, he is a ghost, of whom I know nothing ; whilst his little bird, the least of birds, lives merry and musical yet. Octavius and his like, phantom gentlemen in the "haunted thicket" of old years, have a singular fine charm. Until some plaguey investigator of libraries, of Rolls and Record Offices, unearth my twilight friend, he is mine to dream over, mine to play with. I can enter him a student at the Inns of Court ; make him a tavern wit or playhouse censor ; I can turn him into a country squire, and give him a comely manor in the taste of Inigo. We stroll there together through the "Italianate garden," with its *statua* and *busto*

and pass out into a green coppice. It shall be the old May morning of merry England, May of clear sunlight and soft wind ; Octavius shall quote me his Horace, and I cap him with my dearer Virgil. An air of the scholar's affectation sits prettily upon us, an Oxford touch. We would fain esteem ourselves Younger Plinies of the time, and a neat copy of verses is our pride. Octavius has a decent fair knack at imitation of the great Mr. Cowley, and ever a gratulatory ode at a friend's service. So go we gently through the May morning of a dream ; of winter nights, we "drink tobacco" by the fire of logs in a parlour of black panel, and pore together upon the medals of popes and emperors. Of such sort is my Octavius ; and if I weary of him in such sort, he shall presently proceed ambassador to the Hague, and send me word of tulips.

Out upon that antiquary who shall rob me of my Octavius, my kindly Proteus, whose changes I command ! Yet he may not take from him one thing of worth : his name. Our ancestors had much bravery in this matter, Anthony à Wood to witness. Many good gentlemen adorn to-day the names of Porter, Marsh, Day ; but not a man of them bears before his surname the high appellation of his old historic namesake, Endymion, Narcissus, Angel. There was something of distinction in being by name Myrth Waferer, or Bruno Ryves, or Marchmont Needham, or Vavasor Powell, or Silas Dorville ; though to be Menelaus MacCarmagan were perhaps a thought too lofty, and Theodoric O'Brien a more comfortable style. Octavius Pulleyn lies in the golden mean : it has a sufficiency of strangeness without extravagance. All these gentlemen had their being and these names in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and assuredly the odd or sonorous names attract us, as all things individual and apart attract. So my Octavius, dear ghostly friend, excites and warms the imagination. To be sure, a little poet and dweller in the dust, with his single moment of success, his tiny passage to remembrance ; but

when I think of Virgil's Elysium or of Raphael's Parnassus, I see him modest among the fortunate folk and great crowned ones, and he is softly saying to himself his four lines to Mr. Flatman. *Anch' io poeta!*

Let little poets learn of this my obscure and shrouded friend. I know not that he wrote more than these twenty-five good lines; but they *are* good, they have certainly one lover, and it suffices Octavius. He sought not at all to storm the Sacred Hill, and snatch the laurel with unseemly and obstreperous endeavours; to fill the irritated air with agitated echoes. He knew that when he had lain in earth two hundred years, those happy lines would live, if in the love of but one poor listener, by their proper charm and personality. Later men seem impatient of being merely good craftsmen; they have futile hunger to be great also. The greatest attained not so to greatness; such instancy of desire makes the bronze of Lucan, not the gold of Virgil; it issues in volcano flame, not sunlight. Octavius the "umbratile," quiet man, was content with a miniature immortality, a fame infinitesimal, yet not pitiful; and I love him for it, who live amid Babel's ambitiously contending voices. Compose, with cordial delight and decent pains, one set of verses which the sure celestial instinct tells you to be good, permanently pleasurable; dream, that in two hundred years one man at least will read them with joy and thanks. It is a glow at the heart, a leap in the pulses, that humble dream; what call for nervousness and clamour? A cheerful Octavius, pleased with his little portion of capacity, and not yearning to exceed it, is grateful to the eyes of gods and men.

"Nor gods, nor men, nor Paternoster Row,  
Endure a poet who is just *so-so*,"

as Horace has it, or very nearly. But the abhorred mediocrity is the wild and struggling, not the equable and nice. Exquisite self-knowledge and classic tact led to the right

golden mediocrity of such as Goldsmith or of such as Chénier ; to their clear and just perfection of finished, unforced art, their distinct and delicate mastery. In these is no straining of the note, nor uncertain recklessness ; no pose as of an assured Olympian, stationed upon the heights for everlasting. *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra.* Let little poets remember it, and be what they are capable of being : a harmless, pleasant folk, whose careful, casual utterance may charm a little, centuries hence. It is something of glory to be an Octavius Pulleyn, the happy poet of a little poem still fresh and sweet, though deep lie the dust upon Octavius. That is his plain, and peremptory, and precious moral, a platitude of unesteemed and inestimable value.

But my sermon has betrayed me into treason against my friend. How can he be dead, who is my faithful and fond companion ? I see him now ; the sunlight glows warm over the lawns of Gray's Inn.

“ These be the gardens loved by Lamb,  
Here lodged my mighty namesake Sam,  
And here the venal Verulam,”

to quote an obscure MS. And there, under the magnificent trees with their glossy colonists, the famous rooks, there he strolls and stays, and strolls again, as Pepys and Addison's Sir Roger loved to stroll, as the lyrical Campion of Gray's Inn may have done before them. I follow him from my windows, along the trim walks and terraces, by the flowered great gates of ironwork, up the stately steps ; he finds the London May an exhilarating and fragrant season, and he scarce regrets his country parks and pastures, which show no green more living. His face is something of a fine oval, like that of Mr. Evelyn of Sayes Court,—Sayes Court, not yet marred and befouled by the Czar of Muscovy. His dress is between the Stuart and the Hanoverian, and he wears it well. If ghost he be, it is an elegant ghost, and

none of your unkempt spirits ; with but little alteration, he were a figure for Watteau. He is smiling, and his lips move ; one hand is gently moving too, as if keeping time to music. He is composing a pretty piece of compliment to his friend Mr. Thomas Flatman, whose book is for the press ; and the goodly gardens mind him of his own green lawns and coverts, where the birds are singing. I protest, that as he comes this way, I catch the words :—

“ Pirk up his tayle, and hop between  
The boughs ; by moving, only to be seen ;”

and again (is he playfully thinking of his own little strain of music, his exiguous piping?) :

“ And chirping then begins his best,  
Falls on to pipe among the rest ;  
Deeming that all’s not worth a rush  
Without his whistle from the bush.”

## FRIENDS THAT FAIL NOT

[*The Academy*, Dec. 8, 1900 ; *The Anti-Jacobin*, Oct. 3, 1891.]

THE glowing of my companionable fire upon the backs of my companionable books ; and then the familiar difficulty of choice ! Compassed about with old friends whose virtues and vices I know better than my own, I will be loyal to loves that are not of yesterday. New poems, new essays, new stories, new lives, are not my company at Christmastide, but the never-ageing old. “ My days among the dead are passed.” Veracious Southey, how cruel a lie ! *My* sole days among the dead are the days passed among stillborn or moribund moderns, not the white days and shining nights free for the strong voices of the ancients in fame. A classic has a permanence of pleasurability : that is the meaning of his estate and title. It is the vexing habit of many, whose loving intimacy with the old immortals is undoubted, to assume and say

that no one now reads the *Religio Medici*, or the *Pickwick Papers*, or Ben Jonson's *Masques*, or the *Waverley Novels*, or Pope's "Essay on Man," or Dr. Johnson's *Rambler* and *Idler*. Themselves excepted, there are no votaries, no willing bond-slaves, of such works. It is not credible. I believe that in numbers we are a goodly company who joy in the fresh humanities of the old literature, and are not without a portion of Lamb's spirit. The eight volumes of *Clarissa Harlowe*,—does the world contain volumes more passionately pulsing than these, "my midnight darlings," which tell me of white *Clarissa* in her sorrows, of the brilliant villainies of *Lovelace*? How can that tragedy, that comedy, grow old; and who in his right mind wishes one word away from its voluminous unfolding? Or the evening choice may fall upon the dazzling cruelties of the "Dunciad," and its brutal brilliancy people the room with ghosts in tattered raiment, under their fleshless arms piles of "Proposals" for a new version of *Horace*, and in the pallor of their grotesque countenances the signs of an habitual starvation: it is reality, a gaunt, historic truth.

Presently comes a voice of majestic vastness from the chambers of the incalculable dead, plangent, triumphant, mystically sweet: the voice of him who in life was "a king among death and the dead." Has our world to-day outworn the wisdom, wearied of the music, processionally flowing from the Knight of Norwich? As little as it has outgrown the poignant thinking of *Pascal*, the sad, the haughty, the proudly prostrate before God; or the lacerated heart of *Swift* the lacerating. But at this cordial period of the calendar *Swift* may appear too grim. Let *Fielding*, *Homer* of novelists, lead in *Parson Adams* with his *Æschylus*, or escort *Slipslop*, the fair and frail. It were stupid and mendacious to aver that we have spoken of friends too antiquated for ease of converse with them, that the books of yesterday must claim our preference, that we are affected and ineffective else, and aliens in the air we



breathe. "Peace, for I loved him, and love him for ever! The dead are not dead, but alive," cries Tennyson. What is true of loved humanity is true also of loved humanities, the high expressions of man's mind. As Augustine said of the Christian faith, here is a beauty both old and new; only a starveling imagination is so hampered by the accidents of any ancient excellence that it cannot discern the essence which is dateless. Quaint, old-fashioned, say some when they read the writings of their forefathers; and it is said with a confused and confounding foolishness. Language, manners, circumstances,—these may not be ours; but have we different passions and human relationships, another interest in life and death? Stripped of our "lendings," our ancestors and we are the same, and their writings are contemporary with our own. Smiles can be kindly: but there is something painful in the smiling indulgence with which we are wont to regard the works of old which were once in the very forefront of modernity. We live in time, and the past must always be the most momentous part of it. It will be all past when time, that accident of God, is over. "I will remember the days of old!" "Whatever else we read, Gibbon must always be read too." The spirit of Freeman's verdict applies to all mastership of any Muse. To ignore, to treat with impatience, to be soon weary of an ancient excellence and fame, is like blindness to the natural humanities of the world, to sea and wind and stars, to the forests and mountains. If only we had more of that spirit of tremulous delight, of awe in ecstasy, with which the men of the Renaissance read the recaptured, the resurgent classics of Greece and Rome! Few of us would dare to write at all, had we always before the eyes of our minds remembrance of the mighty. Are *we* of the Apostolic Succession? are *our* reforms legitimate? do *we* consult the general consent of the forefathers? Milton smiles austere at the thought, and Shakespeare smiles compassion; Virgil says gently: "I, dying, wished my *Æneids* to be burnt."

But the torrent of trash runs gaily on, and the struggling critic longs for a breath of the "diviner air": he remembers Bacon's saying, that some books may be read "by deputy," and wishes that he could so read the futilities upon his table. And yet all is repaid by those happy rarities of time, the days on which there comes his unexpectant way occasion for "the noble pleasure of praising": when he can say: "This is the right thing, here is the true touch; my shelves welcome their new companion." There is little fear of excellence escaping him; he fears that fear too much. We do not envy the fate and fame of him who said of Wordsworth: "This will never do!" nor of him who bade Keats "back to his gallipots." We desire no experience of the feelings with which publisher or editor remembers that he "declined with thanks" what the general judgment of the judicious came afterwards to applaud. But, to employ the impressive imagery of Mr. Chadband, I will not go into the city, and, having seen an eel, return to bid the literary world "rejoice with me, for I have seen an elephant!" In the words of that eloquent divine: "Would that be te-rewth?" But when I encounter living genius which may grow to noble proportions, it were a churlish folly to belittle it, to bestow an elegant and timid mediocrity of praise. "All Horace *then*, all Claudian *now*," is as rash a wail as when Byron uttered it, though the voices of Wordsworth and Coleridge were heard in his land. But the classics have attained; they are at rest. Complete, immutable, they have for us no surprises, save the permanent surprise of genius, that "strangeness" without a strain of which "there is no excellent beauty," and which keeps its virginal first freshness from the "valley of perpetual dream." We are so sure of the classics "strongly stationed in eternity."

"There exist moments in the life of man  
When he is nearer the great Soul of the World  
Than is man's custom,"

says Coleridge, translating Schiller. The readers share with the writers of masterpieces the exaltation of such moments, but they come chiefly at sound of "ancestral voices." About contemporary voices there is an element of uncertainty not undelightful, yet forbidding the perfection of faith. We prophesy and wait. And, if the noble ancients are more comforting to us than even the worthiest-seeming moderns, how much more tolerable and pardonable are the mediocrities of the past than of the present ! They are historically interesting. I would rather laugh over the poems of a Cibber or a Pye, than over the poems of their living likes ! It is better to be amused than exasperated, and kindly time lets me laugh at that past incompetence which would annoy me were it present. A monody upon the Death of the Princess Charlotte, totally devoid of merit, does not rouse the wrath aroused by similar performances upon the death of Prince Christian Victor. The insanities of a Lodowick Muggleton or a Joanna Southcott provoke me to more patient an anger than the diatribes of a Dr. Dowie. The blunders of the dead are over and done, harming no one ; the blunders of the living are a danger and a nuisance. It is a pity that anyone, however uncritical, should enjoy the Martin Tupper or Robert Montgomerys of the day ; it implies an inability to enjoy Milton. No man can serve two masters : you cannot be Fielding's friend, and also accept the colossal ineptitudes of our most popular novelists, artless, humourless, most brazen. Bad novels of the last century have never failed to give me a certain pleasure. I trust that posterity may be able to extract pleasure from the bad novels of last year, for I am not. They fill me with the sourest sadness, which is an unwholesome state of mind.

. . . Perhaps there is no country where literary knowledge more abounds than England ; and none where so many men, capable of acquiring it, are content to go without it.

Never was a country where men of ability, and sometimes of genius, were less anxious to strengthen and to nourish their minds with learning, its discipline or its delight. There are some twenty great writers of English literature, from Chaucer down to our day, of whom every intelligent man knows something ; but there are hundreds of writers, worth reading daily, to whom professed men of letters are indifferent or blind.

The fact was illustrated for me by meeting in one month with three men of letters, each of recognised capacity, and each young, who each remarked in the course of conversation : " Oh, I don't read anything " : and it was clear they did not. Voluntary paupers ! starving their souls, impoverishing their brains, and trying to live upon the vital heat of their personal genius. It may be remarked among nearly all classes of literary men : a deliberate indifference to the great riches of literature stored up from old times. No doubt the men of self-sustaining genius read something sometimes in the department of letters. They must have looked into the correspondence of Pope, of Gray, of Cowper, of Lamb. But how many hours have they spent over the letters of Sir Henry Wotton, of Sir John Suckling, of Farquhar ? Oh, the grave courtesy, the merry wit, the brilliant good humour, of these three ! Yet if a simple reader of pleasant books make a remark about them to some flourishing impressionist or scientific comedian, he will be met with something like blank ignorance. Or look at lyric poetry : our friends of genius have read their Herrick and Herbert, and a few more. But what of Vaughan, most solemn and beautiful of mystics ? Of Crashaw, most polite of devout poets ? Of Cotton, that charming poet of genial enjoyment and dainty passion ? Or Habington's *Castara*, or Donne's " Anniversaries," or Marvell's perfect work ? One might go on to a dozen names : Cleveland, Denham, Flatman, Campion, Wither, Lovelace, Carew, and all the inspired company. Are you so intent upon the latest eccentricity of Paris, that

you have no ears for these singers? Or go to biography: Boswell, of course, and Lamb and Gray. But there is a long, long list of good biographies: begin by reading through a few thousand pages of Anthony à Wood, to get the true savour of those lives of the ancient worthies. Or travels: when Mr. Stanley and Lord Randolph Churchill cease to fascinate, Sandys and Addison, Raleigh and Smollett, Ray and Coryat, might prove their powers. If the monthly magazines grow monotonous, there are all the immortal *Spectators* and *Tatlers*, or even the less lively *Ramblers*, ready to tempt us. Perhaps we are a little tired of the wrangles of science and metaphysics: even those eminent men, Mr. Spencer, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Huxley, are not perennially delightful. Then we might try the taste of some older controversies: Dr. Henry More on the Nullibists and Hohenmerians, Locke and Bishop Stillingfleet, Berkeley and the Minute Philosophers. Even Beattie on Truth can be read in fine weather. You refuse to talk of Ibsen for a month? Well, you can read all Webster, Ford, and Marlowe, in less than that time. You have not seen a novel worth reading for six months? Perhaps you may get through *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison* during the next six. Or perhaps a diet of contemporary sonnets leaves you hungry; let me prescribe Drayton's *Polyolbion*. It is true that Mr. Bohn's translations from the Greek and Latin lack the graces of style, besides creating a false impression that the classic writers of prose or poetry were all prose poets. But go, search the bookstalls: between 1500 and 1700 the translations from the classics are to be counted by hundreds.

It is of no use: the starving modern man of letters, like the typical philosopher of Germany, "shuts his eyes, and looks into his stomach, and calls it introspection." So it is: but the process "by any other name" would be no less foolish. Tired of himself, of other people, of his four walls, and of the street outside, what can he do? Clearly,

not read something both old and new, but rather compose a "lyrical note" upon "world-weariness," and an "aquarelle" or "pastel" upon "Pimlico at twilight." That adds to the stock of beauty and wisdom and wit in the world. It is done with a light touch, a penetrating vision, and yet, how it brings the tears to our eyes !

"The sickness of the weeping wind  
And dusty tears of Pimlico !  
And emerald stars begin to glow ;  
O sickness of the weeping wind  
In twilit Pimlico !

"Yet was it thus, in Pimlico,  
Ere sickness seize the weeping wind ?  
Surely the music was not blind,  
Chaunting of love in Pimlico !  
O sick and weeping wind ! "

If I call upon my friend of self-sustaining and self-devouring genius with a newly-bought folio under my arm, will he not smile sadly at my dull pedantic care for the old and outworn masters ? I have but grubbed in the dust of ages, but he has caught the gray and vanishing soul of a tragic impression. If my friend is not of this pallid school, he will probably belong to the school of fresh and vigorous Blood. He is an emphatic person, not unlike the Muscular Christian of forty years ago, but with the Christianity changed into Paganism. Mind you, he is not an Athenian pagan, an Alcibiades, but something brawnier and burlier, with Yankee smartness instead of Attic quickness. He has all the virtues, but he hates squeamishness : his metaphors are hot and red. No sick and weeping winds for him. He will write you a short story, or tell you a long one, and wind up with the brief words : "Currie's conscience just then was like a butcher's shop on a hot summer's day." We know, whatever the story may have been about, that it wasn't, but, hang it all ! you must show that you don't shirk nasty things, like a girl. "Give me a man !" (That you may turn him, my dear friend, into a savage ?)

A great deal is said nowadays about the various follies of modern literature, and various theories are given to account for them. There are plenty of reasons why literature should be in a somewhat unsatisfactory state : but the chief reason is surely too much ignorance of the past, an unreflecting concentration upon the present, and a morbid haste to anticipate the future. Able men commit follies of taste in style and in idea which are incompatible with a willing study of the old great masters, and of the old writers who come worthily after them. Many a dull book written a hundred years ago, is better reading than many a popular book of our time : for its faults are faults on the right side. There are living to-day men capable of the finest work, but lacking humility, patience, reverence, three forms of one inestimable spirit.

. . . . Perish, cried Newman, the whole tribe of Hookers and Jewels, so Athanasius and the majestic Leo may be mine ! We cannot afford to let go the Shining Ones upon the heights. It does not matter that the heights are so high, that our intelligences climb up so poor a portion of the way. He would be a liar full of impudence who should dare to say that he felt wholly at ease with the awful Milton or Dante, with the solemn meditations of Browne, with the dread death-march over death of dread Lucretius. There are times when the high things of art seem almost incredible ; magnificent delusions, golden dreams : their creators' pains must surely have been too vast for bearing. We, with our little lamps of intelligence in our hands, go tremblingly through the sacred dimness, hoping to comprehend at last a little more. Our reverence is a religion ; genius, like love and beauty, is a pledge of divinity and the everlasting ; a light perfected lyric lures us heavenward ; and from of old come the proudest and the clearest voices. The voices of the day must wait for their consecrate authority and confirmed applause till Time, the just, shall please. Take me with you in spirit, Ancients of Art,

the crowned, the sceptred, whose voices this night chaunt a *gloria in excelsis*, flooding the soul with a passion of joy and awe.

## CLARENCE MANGAN

[*The Academy*, February 5th, 1898.]

No one can thoroughly realize Mangan's life without some knowledge of Dublin: not knowledge of Ireland at large, for Mangan had practically none, save by reading; but knowledge of that Dublin "dear and dirty," splendid and squalid, fascinating and repulsive, which was Mangan's from the cradle to the grave. There is there an unique piteousness of poverty and decay, a stricken and helpless look, which seem appropriate to the scene of the doomed poet's life. It was a life of dreams and misery and madness, yet of a self-pity which does not disgust us, and of a weakness which is innocent; it seems the haunted, enchanted life of one drifting through his days in a dream of other days and other worlds, golden and immortal. He wanders about the rotting alleys and foul streets, a wasted ghost, with the "Dark Rosaleen" on his lips, and a strange light in those mystical blue eyes, which burn for us yet in the reminiscences of all who ever saw him and wrote of the unforgettable sight. And, with all his remoteness, all his wretchedness, there was a certain grimly pathetic and humorous common-sense about him, which saved him from being too angelic a drunkard, too ethereal a vagabond, too saintly a wastrel. Hard as it is to believe at all times, he was an intelligible, an explicable human being, and not some "twy-natured" thing, some city faun. All the accounts and descriptions of him show us a man whom external circumstances, however prosperous and bright, would not have prevailed upon to be as other men are. As has been said of other poets, "he hungered for better bread than can be made of wheat," and would have contrived to lose his



way, to be "homesick for eternity," despite all earthly surroundings of happiness and ease. Sensitive in the extreme, he shrank back into the shadows at a breath, not merely of unkindness, but of unpleasantness; he shuddered and winced, blanched and withered away at a touch of the east wind. His miseries, which dictated to him that agonized poem, "The Nameless One," were primarily of his own creation, realities of his own imagination, and, therefore, the more terrible: they were the agonies of a child in the dark, quivering for fear of that nothing which is to him so infinitely real and dread a "something." For Mangan's childhood, boyhood, first youth, though hard and harsh, were not unbearably so; many a poet has borne far worse, and survived it unscathed. A rough and stern, rather than cruel, father; office drudgery with coarse companions; stinted, but not insufficient means; a general absence of congenial sympathy and friendship,—these are rude facts to face; but even a poet, all nerves and feeling, need not find life a hell because of them, the world a prison, all things an utter darkness of despair. And even Mangan's failure in love, whatever be the truth of that obscure event, would hardly account, by its own intrinsic sadness, for his abysmal melancholy and sense of doom. Further, when we find him in true deeps of actual woefulness, the bond-slave of opium and alcohol, living in the degradations of poverty, enchained, as St. Augustine has it, *sua ferrea voluntate*, by the iron chain of his unwilling will, yet it is not his fall that haunts him, but that sense of undeserved early torments and tortures, enfolding him as with a black impenetrable cloud. It was not only the lying imaginativeness of the opium-eater or of the drunkard that made him tell stories of fearful things which never happened; nor was it merely his artistic instinct toward presenting his life not quite as it was, but as it might have been, nor yet his elvish turn for a little innocent deception. Beyond a doubt, his temperament, immeasurably delicate and sensitive, received

from its early experiences a shock, a shaking, which left him tremulous, impotent, a leaf in the wind, upon the water. His first sufferings in life were but the child's imagined ghosts; but the "shock to the system," to his imaginative sensitive temperament, was lasting, and he lived in a *penumbra* of haunting memories and apprehensions. In Browning's words, it was :

"The glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again !"

Life had struck him in his affections and emotions: he could never recover from the blow, could but magnify it in memory and imagination, conceive himself marked by it, go apart from the world to hide it, go astray in the world to forget it. That was Mangan's tragedy.

But he did not suffer it to cloud his poetry with darkness of expression at any time, nor, at its finest times, with darkness of theme or thought. It forced him into writing a deal of unworthy clever stuff, and a deal of excellent work far below his highest ability and achievement. But not a faint shadow of unhappiness dims the radiance of his "Dark Rosaleen," its adoring, flashing, flying, laughing rapture of patriotic passion. It is among the great lyrics of the world, one of the fairest and fiercest in its perfection of imagery and rhythm; it is the chivalry of a nation's faith struck on a sudden into the immortality of music. And Mangan's next glory, his version of "O'Hussey's Ode to the Maguire," is no less perfect upon its lower, yet lofty, plane. A certain Elizabethan poet has this pleasing stanza upon the Irish of his day, as he viewed them :

"The Irish are as civil, as  
The Russies in their kind ;  
Hard choice, which is the best of both,  
Each bloodie, rude, and blind !"

The "Ode to the Maguire" gives the noble side to the question, a ferocity that is heroic, in lines of the largest

Homeric simplicity and greatness ; and as the "Dark Rosaleen" sings the devotion of a nation to their country in oppression, so this chants that of a follower to his chief in defeat ; but in neither is there the note of despair, in both is the note of glory. Other of Mangan's poems upon Ireland, original or based upon Gaelic originals, have a like lustrous quality : he loved to lose himself in Ireland's past and future, and thereby made poems which will have helped to make the future Ireland. Upon such work as this he left no mark of his mental miseries and physical dishonours ; indeed, his poems, though often tragic with sorrow, or trivial with levity, or both at once, are always pure and clear in every sense : in poetry, at least, he lived an innocent life. Besides his own Ireland, there were two chief worlds in which he loved to wander : the moonlit forests of German poetry, often painfully full of "moonshine," and the glowing gardens or glittering deserts of the Eastern, the "Saracenic" world. He wished, half-whimsically and half-seriously, to make his readers believe that he knew some dozen languages ; certain it is that he had a strong philological instinct, and much of that aptitude for acquiring a vast half-knowledge of many things not commonly known, which he shares with the very similar, and dissimilar, Poe. But his "translations" from many tongues, even when, as in the case of German, he knew his originals well, were wont to be either frank paraphrases or imitations, often to his originals' advantage. Some of his work in this kind is admirable, and of a cunning art : the work of a poet to whom rhythm and metre, with all technical difficulties and allurements, are passionately interesting ; yet we regret the time spent upon most of them, and lost to his own virgin Muse. He seems to have felt that he was content to earn the wages upon which he lived from hand to mouth, by such secondary work, as though he despaired of attempting, or preferred to keep in sacred silence, his higher song. He has given us little of that. A selection from his poems

can be bought for sixpence, and one could spare, it may be, a hundred out of its one hundred and forty-four pages. But what remains is, in its marvellous moments of entire success, greater than anything that Ireland has yet produced in English verse, from Goldsmith to Mr. Yeats. From Mangan's birth in 1803 to his painful and merciful death in 1849, if there be anything joyous or pleasant in his record the reader forgets it in the woes and glooms that precede and follow. He had true friends, he could talk with them brilliantly, books were ever a solace and delight to him; little as he cared for fame, he knew that he deserved it, and he loved his art. His curious humour, chiefly at his own expense, was sometimes more than a Heinesque jesting, and shows him with sudden phases or fits of good spirits. But, for the rest, his life is a record of phantasmal dejections and cloudings of soul, as though he were rejected of God and abandoned of man. At almost every page, a reader fresh to his name and fame might expect the next to chronicle a suicide's end, like those of Chatterton and Gerard de Nerval. His story is infinitely sad, but never abjectly or repulsively so. Here is the foredoomed dreamer, of fragile body and delicate soul, the innocent victim of himself, about whom we know much that is frail and pitiable, nothing that is base and mean: the voice, often tremulous in lamentation and broken by weeping, from which rose and rang the very glory and rapture of Irish song.

“Him grant a grave to, ye pitying noble,  
Deep in your bosoms: there let him dwell!  
He, too, had tears for all souls in trouble  
Here, and in Hell.”

## SANTO VIRGILIO \*

[*The Academy*, Feb. 10, 1900.]

BAYLE, in his article upon Virgil—a plague upon the probable accuracy of pedantry which writes Virgil!—remarks: “*Il n’y a rien de plus ridicule que ce que l’on conte de sa magie, et des prétendus prodiges qu’il fit voir aux Napolitains.*” After which trenchant and terse verdict there follows, as usual, one of those delightfully colossal notes, which, for very wantonness of erudition, always remind us of Burton. But that *magie* and those *prodiges* have been the theme of laborious scholarship, and found to be of much significance. Signor Comparetti, of Florence (perhaps the most variously learned of living men), has, in his work on Virgil in the Middle Ages, given us, once for all, the finest word of scholarship upon the matter; and now there comes to us from Florence a little work, by way, as it were, of supplement to that masterpiece. Mr. Leland,\* creator of Hans Breitmann, translator of Heine, anthropologist among American Indians and European gypsies, has of late devoted himself to a singular, a fascinating, an (to put it German-wise) in-difficulties-and-doubts-abounding field of investigation. A few years ago he published his *Roman Etruscan Remains in Popular Legend*, wherein he claimed to show that in Italy there exists, side by side with Christianity, a most venerable and primitive Paganism; not the formal civic religion of ancient cultured Rome, but a thing of the villages and woods and fields and vineyards; a true product of lusty wild Mother Earth; never spoken of in senatorial edicts nor merged into the hierarchical order of State religion. Etruria, that mysterious region of a vanished civilization, was its chief home; and its practices remain, in the

\* *The Unpublished Legends of Virgil*. Collected by Charles Godfrey Leland. (Elliot Stock.) 1900.

form of sorcery and magic, wizardry and incantation, witchcraft and necromancy, in the present Italy of to-day, dying, doomed to die, yet discoverable by research and patience still. In a word, that popular body of beliefs and superstitions, whereof the old classics, by tantalising glimpses, make us well aware as having prevailed in classic Italy, has never perished from the soil of Italy. Impoverished, contaminated, debased, jealously hidden out of sight, it is still there. Have patience and cunning, and you will find it in the hearts and upon the lips of withered crones, of peasants versed in ancestral folklore. It will reach you in the rudest of Italian dialects, and from the least modernised of Italian districts ; but it also lurks even beneath the shadow of Santa Croce at Florence, and of St. Peter's at Rome.

Mr. Leland is incapable of dulness, but he has his defects. He is vivid, picturesque, dramatic, exciting, at the expense of orderliness, sobriety, method. He gives us a brilliant bundle of notes and sketches, rather than a finished book. He would sooner be careless than pedantic, inaccurate than dogmatic. He is a writer whose veracity one cannot question, but whose authority one hesitates to quote ; he is more enjoyable than useful. It is sometimes hard to make up one's mind whether or not he wishes to be of real assistance to the scientific student of anthropology. His light-hearted indifference to precision infects his proof-reading. We shrink, in the present volume, from misprints which make Browning unmeaning, Martial both unmeaning and unmetrical. Another flaw, or fault, derogatory to any serious and courteous scholar, is his constant girding at the Christian religion, especially in its Catholic form, in a vein of humour which entirely fails to be humorous, and which would still be offensive even if successful. But let us turn from this, and come to the more alluring theme of *Santo Virgilio*.

Signor Comparetti devotes his great work to the study

of the mediæval Virgil as he appears in the literature of the learned, and of that literature as applied to the amusement of the less learned and the illiterate. He speaks of little else but what can be read in extant MSS. or print, and gives but a few lines to the Virgil whose transmogrified phantom flits yet in living legend underived from literary sources, that is, of course, to say, not immediately and consciously derived, but traditional. Mr. Leland, struck by this fact, set himself to collect, by his usual methods, Virgilian legends alive among the people, with the result that he presents to us some fifty tales; and it is safe to say that many, if not most, of them are assignable to no known source in the mass of mediæval Virgilian legend extant as literature. Obviously, the mediæval writers, of whatever kind, who have preserved for us the fantastic Virgil of popular myth could not record all they knew or heard; and there came a time when such legends cease to be collected. But they did not therefore cease to be handed down among the people; and the popular Italian memory, which is a museum of confused relics, and the popular Italian imagination, which is a factory of things fanciful or grotesque, have between them produced these extraordinary narratives, wherein the medley mediæval conceptions of history and science and the supernatural are in full vigour. Recorded at the close of the nineteenth century, they essentially belong to the ages which made "Virgil, Duke of Naples," the contemporary of Homer and of King Arthur and of the Soldan of Babylon; they descend in spiritual and imaginative lineage from the times when

"Son nom, balbutié par les hommes nouveaux,  
Fit se lever, dans les ténèbres des cerveaux,  
Lauré d'or et de feu, le fantôme d'un mage.  
Le peuple, qui vénère encore son image,  
Broda sur sa mémoire un étrange roman  
De sorcier secourable et de bon nécroman."

Assuredly, it is as "*sorcier secourable et bon nécroman*" that this "translated" Virgil figures in Mr. Leland's books; he has still the "white soul" that Horace loved, and is still, despite his strange transformations, the Virgil over whose tomb at Puteoli, so they sang in the churches of Mantua, Saint Paul wept and said: "Ah, what manner of man had I not made of thee had I but found thee living, O prince of poets!" True, he is frolicsome, prankish, as well as helpful and benevolent; but then, as Faustus felt, if you are a magician, the temptation to merry jests and practical jokes is irresistible. Here, with one exception, he does nothing quite unworthy of the Virgil whom primitive and later Christianity hailed as the herald of the Nativity, the first discernor of the Star of Bethlehem, the Virgil who chaunted in his inspired "Pollio" the Desire of the Nations, Him who should come. There is nothing of the Virgil whom harsher spirits accused of working wonders "by whitchcraft and nigramansy thorough the help of the devylls of hell." This, according to one of Mr. Leland's stories, was the fashion of Virgil's own coming, and it is exquisitely imagined of him whom Renan calls "*le tendre et clairvoyant Virgile*." There was a lady of Rome called Helen, the world's wonder for beauty, but she would not wed for terror of childbirth; she therefore fled to an impregnable tower far without the walls; but (and here, as Mr. Leland notes, we have the Danaë myth), Jupiter descended as a shower of gold-leaf, and it fell into her cup, which she had no fear to drink.

"But hardly had Helen drunk the wine before she felt a strange thrill in all her body, a marvellous rapture, a change of her whole being, followed by complete exhaustion. And in time she found herself with child, and cursed the moment when she drank the wine. And to her in this way was born Virgil, who had in his forehead a most beautiful star of gold. Three fairies aided at his birth: the Queen of the Fairies cradled him in a cradle made of roses. She made a fire of twigs of laurels: it crackled loudly. To the crackling of twigs of laurel was he



born ; his mother felt no pain. The three each gave him a blessing : the wind as it blew into the window wished him good fortune ; the light of the stars, and the lamp, and the fire, who are all spirits, gave him glory and song. He was born fair and strong, and strong and beautiful ; all who saw him wondered."

It is characteristic, this mingling of Helen, Danaë, Jupiter, the Fairies, Rome ; elsewhere in the piece we have the King of the Magicians, the Emperor, and the Turks. It were nothing wonderful if we also had Abraham, Socrates, Julius Cæsar, and the Pope, all meeting in this wonderland out of time and space. We should be grateful to Mr. Leland had he rescued for us no more than the perfect passage quoted, so unconsciously superb and glittering a praise of the everlasting Virgil. And there are other things in the book hardly less beautiful, together with a mass of legends depicting, in a strain of innocent jocularly, this Virgil of the mediæval phantasy, saint and mage. In this aspect, the work, as we have said, is a complement to Signor Comparetti's elaborate study ; but it also continues Mr. Leland's studies in the survival of that secret paganism ineradicable, at least in spirit, from the thrice-haunted earth of Italy. Here are spells, incantations, remembrances of infinitely ancient deities and powers, which at once impress the reader as far older in spirit than the tales and legends in which they are embodied ; as older, not only than the historic Virgil, but older than the first foundation and walls of Rome. "*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurrit*" : worship of "Madre Natura" is in some form inevitable. With the educated it turns to poetry or a poetical pantheism ; with the less sophisticated it abides as something much more practical.

No poet has shared the astonishing fate of Virgil ; no other writer of antiquity has been so familiar a name to Christianity. Signor Comparetti has supplied an abundance of historical reasons why this should be so, and, as

all scholars know, a special veneration began, even in his lifetime, to gather round the person, and upon his death, round the tomb, of him whom Rome regarded as the laureate and paramount poet of Rome : in his own realm he held the throne, wore the laurel and the imperial robe. History explains why, even in after ages insensible to his essential greatness, he retained the pre-eminence. And yet that veneration, which is at its noblest height in Dante, at its lowest in certain of the most insensate myths concerning him, seems to have about it an inner propriety and congruity and significance. For the poet of imperial Rome is also the poet of human sadness and mortal longing ; in him is the craving for a Golden Age, the apprehension of suffering and death, the feeling of fatality, the sense of the mystery of things, the mingled exultation and melancholy of man, the haunting appeals of nature, the mystical meanings of beauty, the manifold marvel of existence. Virgil is one of his own pale ghosts, stretching forth his hands toward "the farther shore," and dreaming of a world regenerate ; he embodies

". . . the prophetic soul  
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

"The chastest poet and royalest that to the memory of man is known," as Bacon calls him, has a note of universality, a kinship with all the race of man. The "courteous" Virgil, as Dante loves to say, has a dignity of compassion, a priestly bearing, an ever gracious and majestic utterance. In a sense far deeper than that of mediæval writers or modern peasants of Italy, he is a magician, an enchanter, touching hearts to tears and thoughts of reverence. Like Plato, he sometimes seems trembling upon the borders of Christianity, groping for it wistfully, filled with the emotions of desire which it satisfies. Grotesque as often were the travesties made of him, in his mediæval character of supreme thaumaturgist and lord over the wisdom

of the universe; absurd as it may sound to hear him spoken of to-day as a great "signor," something between Simon Magus and Saint George, and Haroun Alraschid and Don Quixote and Prospero; yet we are not taken utterly aback by the unique destiny which has effected this. For in the melancholy majesty of his mighty line we commune with the "white soul" which, at the height of Rome's magnificence, was not of that age, but of all ages, in virtue of an intense humanity. If he did not, in man's service, control the powers of nature, none has more profoundly expressed and praised them, the august workings amid which man lives. If he did not with authority go about doing good to men, none has more fully and perfectly given a voice to the infinite longing of their souls, nor spoken with a tenderer austerity.

## ARCHBISHOP LAUD

[*The Spectator*, March 23, 1895.]

BEFORE Laud, no one in high place had died for the Anglican Church, as understood in our day by Keble and Pusey; he set the seal of his blood upon the English Church as a Primitive and Catholic body, neither of Rome nor of Geneva. Think what they may of his political and social action, of his temper, prudence, and statesmanship, Laud remains for High Anglicans the valiant soldier of their faith, stainless in moral character, excellent in learning, staunch and stout in the exact truth, fearing not the face of man.

. . . Laud's position had a twofold difficulty. He was the first spiritual Head of the Reformed Church in England, after the final Elizabethan settlement, who maintained the High Church doctrine and discipline; and he was the last statesman-prelate in England, at a time when the possibility and the utility of such a man were outworn and past.

A study of the "personal religion" of Henry VIII.'s three crowned children would be of strange value to psychologists and to moral theologians; but certainly the historian must agree with Dr. Stubbs, that the ultimate religious issue of those three reigns was "a compromise, satisfactory to no party, and very unsatisfactory indeed to the constitutional lawyer or historian, but possibly the best arrangement compatible with circumstances." The Marian persecution excited Reformed Churchmen; they returned, fresh from "eating mice at Zurich" and elsewhere, full of a fiery Protestantism which saw in prelacy and ceremonialism "the rags of Popery." They burned with zeal for a rigid theocracy free from the trammels of ancient law and order; they plunged into "the Lord's quarrel" and "the Lord's controversy." They were not harmonious among themselves: but all of them, and of those who in England agreed with any of them, were, in Bossuet's phrase, somewhat expanded, "seekers, so called because, seventeen hundred years after Christ, they were still seeking for true religion, and had not found it." Many of them believed that in the Calvinist scheme they had the pure type of early Christianity: but, historically, the type was new. Laud met them all with a certain academic impatience: "Lord! what fools these mortals be!" To resent the decent and authoritative ways of religion; to reject the voice of centuries; to confound Anglicanism with Popery; to erect a new hierarchy of preachers; or to bid every man or every congregation be a law for himself or themselves,—all that irritated the scholar, the antiquary, even the artist and æsthete, in Laud. "A fellow of mean extraction and of arrogant pride," says Mrs. Hutchinson, that aristocratic saint of cultured Puritanism. She should have said, a man of worthy middling extraction, of hot temper, and of strong convictions, which he took to be common-sense. In the Laud and Strafford correspondence, it is not pleasant to hear the two men hallooing *Thorough!* across the Irish

Channel, with little private jests, and mutual encouragement, and a common impatience of their opponents. But that correspondence reveals no more than does Laud's Diary, a tyrant great or small ; he is rather like the obstinate jury-man or committee-man, simply annoyed at antagonism. These fellows, your Prynnes, Burtons, Bastwicks, or your Scots mob, to set themselves against the powers that be, and against reverend antiquity ! It is like the college don rating an undergraduate who will not observe some college rule : age against youth, prescription against innovation, authority against license. "Civil liberty," said Butler, preaching before the House of Lords on King Charles's Day, "the liberty of a community, is a severe and restrained thing : implies, in the notion of it, authority, settled subordinations, subjection and obedience ; and is altogether as much hurt by too little of this kind, as by too much of it." That was Laud's view. "This is the way ; walk ye in it." It is an anachronism to cry out upon him for his methods, his Star Chamber and High Commission manners. A citizen in Shelley's dramatic fragment, "Charles the First," at sight of Leighton's wounds, exclaims :

"Are these the marks with which  
Laud thinks to improve the image of his Maker  
Stamped on the face of man ?"

Yet that good indignant citizen would have strung up a Papist or a Quaker, after cruel torment and mutilation, and thought that he was "hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord." But [the] biographers clearly and conclusively prove their case, when they plead that Laud's "cruelties" were not only no whit in excess of contemporary custom, but actually fell short of it. Like a magistrate or a school-master, he often felt that "a good whipping will cure this nonsense ;" he had no personal pleasure in inflicting punishment. Nor did he hold the divine right of kings with any extreme insistence ; he had nothing in common

with that acrid Erastian, Hobbes, nor with the later violence of Sacheverell. Yet, since King James and his "no Bishop, no King," the English Church had heartily thrown herself upon the side of a monarchy so allied, by its own confession, to episcopacy. And the confession was largely true: in Stuart times, all authority hung together. The fanatic sectary, with his liberty of conscience, his allegiance to God alone, was a danger to the State; whatever concessions Charles and Buckingham and Strafford and Laud might have made, the Revolution would have come, the strange and tragic vindication of our liberties through blood and fire and tyranny. And so the simple gentleman or tradesman who resented undue public burdens, joined hands with the religious enthusiast; Church and State were one, and oppressed them equally, and through the same ministers. Most modern men have probably asked themselves: Should I have been Roundhead or Cavalier? And most must have found it a difficult question. Laud had no difficulty; like Burke, he held old institutions to be sacred, almost because they were old; in venerable and hallowed things was a sure ground, and, for rational men, a large room. And Laud was no hidebound ecclesiastic to whom the ecclesiastical life and order are dearer and nearer than the spiritual; Saint Charles Borromeo or Saint Francis of Sales was scarce more devout and passionately humble in the interior life. And in such matters as education and learning, Laud was Aristotle's "magnificent man." Oxford and Dublin had no truer benefactor than their Chancellor, Laud, a princely scholar and patron of letters, a man in many ways ahead of his age, a man of research and erudition. When the Parliamentary Court taunted him with his Scotch Liturgy for its Popish leanings, he retorted that he could wish the English Prayer-book were in the same points equally conformable with the best antiquity. In all, we see a man of fervent resolution, who had no patience—or, at least, too little patience,—with opposition.

A Chief Justice has an interview with him. We know the facts of the case at issue ; he and the Archbishop were equally right and wrong. But the Chief Justice left the Archbishop, "choked with a pair of lawn sleeves." And we remember that famous talk of Hyde with Laud in the Lambeth Gardens, not unlike a famous talk of Dr. Johnson with Bennet Langton. Laud refused to allow that he was really discourteous, brow-beating, imperative ; it was but a natural infirmity of manner ; he liked to do his business, and have done with it. Men who in all sincerity did not find themselves helped, but rather hindered, in their devotions, by ornate or even noticeable ceremonial, who found "the word of the Lord," the preached word, their best means of grace, met in Laud a man to whom such worship was not merely unmeaning, but absurd. Men, red-hot from "Jack Calvin's" school, to set themselves against Cyprian and Augustine, and the laws of England ! The trouble lay, often enough, in the novelty of his Anglicanism : Parker and Abbot had not discoursed so ; even Hooker, with his deathbed intercourse with Saravia, did not speak so ; not all Laud's fellow-prelates taught so. And what a bishop might have taught and inculcated in his own diocese was not equally acceptable from an Archbishop who exercised the strictest rights of visitation throughout all dioceses, and was also an official minister of the Crown. "*Pour gagner l'humanité*," says Joubert, "*il faut être aimable*." Now, Laud was "to those men that loved him, sweet as summer" : so were Pius IX. and Cardinal Manning. But Leo XIII. and Cardinal Newman are universally loved and cherished ; so, in past days, were the Anglican prelates, Andrewes, Wilson, Ken. "His heat, fussiness, and arbitrary temper," wrote Mr. Arnold of Laud. It is sadly true. For perhaps the two fairest "characters" of him we turn to Clarendon and Hume ; and they tell the same tale. Heroic old man, saintly and chivalrous, strong and beautiful in his death ; but not to all men, and of sheer necessity, lovable. All

through his life, from Oxford to Tower Hill, friends caressingly, and foes contemptuously, called him "little Laud." What was true of his bodily stature, was true, in a measure, of his intellectual. It is, perhaps, the supreme glory of a great man that he can appreciate his enemies, as Cromwell unquestionably did. Laud was surprised at them, irritated by them. "Order," says Guizot, "always seemed to him justice;" and to enforce order, he dispensed with all conciliatory tact. And so, as the Cavalier poet Cleveland has it, "The State in Strafford fell, the Church in Laud." Unlike Wolsey or Richelieu, he studied to serve his God while serving his King, God's minister of State; but spiritual sympathy with God's people, through all their errors, was far from him. Intensely English, he cherished his obstinacy as a virtue, and had no dramatic intuition into the wants and necessities of other souls; for truth, in its rigidity and harshness, unsoftened and unsweetened to win assent, he was willing to die, with a *non possumus* in answer to every thought of even innocent concession. His latest biographers give us the man at his best; and it is the portrait of one "ever a fighter" without fear, as resolute as "lion Eliot" himself. It were of small use to lament over his mistakes, and to dream of what might have been in Church and State. A great death is a national treasure, be it the crown of however mistaken a life. Not the Anglican Church only, but every body of Protestants in England, is the stronger for him; his blood has been "the seed" of the one, his sternness has but heartened the others. *Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo* was his dying desire. And so let us leave him.



## A WORD ABOUT THACKERAY

[*The Academy*: March 7, 1891.]

THERE are two points upon which it may be worth while to say something : the satire of Thackeray, and his art. Either is constantly misunderstood, and without dogmatizing on the matter, one may try to clear it from prejudice and misconception. It is commonly held by the unreflecting that your satirist is bitter, your humourist a jester. Men talk of Thackeray's cynicism and of Lamb's merriment, as though the one has no sympathies and the other no sorrows. Before Carlyle and Landor wrote, men talked of Dante's savagery and scorn. It is as though a writer must needs be a man of iron, without "bowels of mercy," unless he show himself lachrymose and sentimental. And yet there are "thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears." Mr. Pater has written excellently, as he always writes, upon this matter :

"The author of the *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century*, coming to the humourists of the nineteenth, would have found, as is true pre-eminently of Thackeray himself, the springs of pity in them deepened by the deeper subjectivity, the intenser and closer living with itself, which is characteristic of the temper of the later generation ; and therewith, the mirth also, from the amalgam of which with pity humour proceeds, has become in Charles Dickens, for example, freer and more boisterous."

As mere matter of fact, laughter and tears, humour and pity, satire and pathos, lie very near each other ; so near that Heine and Sterne pass from one to the other by some sort of natural instinct, and often labour to expose the fact unhappily. Thackeray, in his lightest social satire, mordant and stinging, does more than strip a pretension or ridicule an absurdity. Under the brilliant wit and superb scorn lies the haunting thought of pity for "man, the admirable, the pitiable." He has distinguished between the attitudes of Swift, Addison, and Steele towards humanity : the terrible

contempt of Swift, the pensive serenity of Addison, the simple tenderness of Steele. Combine the three, and there is Thackeray : too clear-sighted to accept delusions, too reverent to despair, too kindly to be always glad. . . .

Dr. John Brown, in his noble tribute to Thackeray at the great man's death, records a scene which seems as characteristic of its recorder as of its theme. Thackeray and two friends were walking outside Edinburgh, under an evening sky of loveliest delicacy :

"The northwest end of Corstorphine Hill, with its trees and rocks, lay in the heart of this pure radiance ; and a wooden crane, used in the quarry below, was so placed as to assume the figure of a cross : there it was, unmistakable, lifted up against the crystalline sky. As they gazed, he gave utterance in a tremulous, gentle, and rapid voice, to what all were feeling, in the word : 'Calvary !' The friends walked on in silence, and then turned to other things. All that evening he was very gentle and serious, speaking (as he seldom did) of divine things ; of death, of sin, of eternity, of salvation ; expressing his simple faith in God and in his Saviour."

There, surely, is a touching thing told touchingly. . . .

Turning once more to Mr. Pater, we read in two passages of

"that old-world sentiment, based on the feelings of hope and awe, which may be described as the religion of men of letters . . . religion as understood by the soberer men of letters in the last century, Addison, Gray, and Johnson ; by Jane Austen and Thackeray, later."

After pages of literally tremendous denunciation and scorn, Thackeray brings us back to the universal and elementary affections, pity and charity, and hope, in words, as Mr. Lang has noted, of incomparable music and beauty. And this, not out of a weak concession to sentiment, but because it is verifiable and true, the testimony of experience. Nothing could be less true than the assertion of M. Taine :

"Il fait dans le roman ce que Hobbes fit en philosophie. Presque toujours, lorsqu'il décrit de beaux sentiments, il les dérive d'une vilaine source."

It is precisely because Thackeray, discerning so well the abundant misery and hollowness in life, discerns also all that is not miserable and hollow, that he is so great. He has neither the somewhat bestial pessimism of M. Zola, nor the fatuous gaiety of M. Ohnet. Like any classic, he stands the test of experience, of psychology. We have mentioned together Swift, Addison, and Steele ; we might take Lucretius, Virgil, and Horace. Each has left a picture of patrician life, glittering and tedious. Lucretius, contrasting the splendour without and the gloom within ; Virgil, the restlessness and haste with the placid peace of the country ; Horace, content to let it all go by, neither envying nor despising. Something of each, again, is in Thackeray, an English classic not less true and real than the classic Romans.

Most of the disputes about Thackeray's art, in the strict sense of art, are occupied with the personal note in his novels : with the intrusion, as some call it, of his personality. Art, we are told, is impersonal ; and we believe it. But if that imply that no novel should reflect its author's spirit, then no artistic novel has yet been written. It is a question of words : each writer has his manner of work and habit of mind ; let him follow those faithfully, and the result will be good, if he be an artist. Who wishes away Fielding's enchanting chapters between the books of *Tom Jones* ? Or who wishes to find essays by Flaubert between the chapters of *Madame Bovary* ? Each follows his own way, and there are many ways in art. Thackeray's reflections and discussions do not spoil his story, because they are not mere moralising, which the reader might do for himself. Whenever a reader stops, and says to himself that the writer might have credited his readers with wits enough to see such and such a thing, without being shown it, then the writer has been superfluous. A sentence instead of a word, a chapter instead of a page, are unpardonable sins : but who can say, that he could have done Thackeray's reflections

for himself? And they do not occur in the course of actual narration: Rawdon Crawley confronts Lord Steyne, Lady Castlewood welcomes Esmond at Winchester, without any dissertation from Thackeray. At least, let us call these passages of personal meditation a wrong thing done exquisitely: beyond that we refuse to go.

Let us end with a letter of Newman, published since his death: a voice from the dead, one immortal upon another:

"I write . . . to express the piercing sorrow that I feel in Thackeray's death. You know I never saw him, but you have interested me in him, and one saw in his books the workings of his mind; and he has died with such awful suddenness. A new work of his had been advertised, and I had looked forward with pleasure to reading it; and now the drama of his life is closed, and he himself is the greatest instance of the text of which he was so full, *vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas* . . . What a world this is! How wretched they are who take it for their portion!"

"Qualibus in tenebris vitæ quantisque periculis  
Degitur hoc ævi quodcumque!"

Thackeray and Newman both knew that: but that was not all they knew.

## COVENTRY PATMORE'S GENIUS\*

[*The Daily Chronicle*, October 22, 1900.]

THE "crested and prevailing name" of Coventry Patmore stands for diverse things to diverse men; his was a mind of almost laughable simplicity and consistency, yet no two men, appreciating it either from the experience of personal intimacy, or from the study of his work, would portray and interpret it alike. . . .

Mr. Patmore had no adventures but those of the mind and spirit; his biography is the record, often vastly amusing, often vastly exasperating, of one who lived for high and invisible realities, and amid the commerce and pressure of

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\* *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore.* By Basil Champneys. 2 vols. London: Bell and Sons, 1900.

the phenomenal world, wherein he was no helpless dreamer, was always in touch with the hidden things of faith. His poetry was a devotion, his sense of art was worship, his way through life was upward. A terribly sensitive and strong man, he centred and concentrated his energies upon the apprehension and expression of the divine secrets which explain the human mysteries : secrets few, but sufficing. Inspiration is no vain word to use concerning him, and to himself his imaginings were verities for which he was not responsible, but grateful, with a joyous fear and trembling. His loves and hates were necessary and essential, part of his duty towards eternal truth ; he might have cried, with Augustine : " If we be deceived, it is by Thee we are deceived " ; or, with a later divine not dear to him : " Here stand I ! God help me, I cannot otherwise." Beauty was no beauty to him, unless, according to the famous definition, it was indeed *splendor veritatis*, truth in the glory of its shining. Authority is stamped upon his work, which made no compromises with the desires of weaklings or the ignorances of fools. His poetry was an action, a service, a deed for truth.

" Therefore no plaint be mine  
Of listeners none,  
No hope of rendered use or proud reward,  
In hasty times or hard ;  
But chants as of a lonely thrush's throat  
At latest eve,  
That does in each calm note  
Both joy and grieve :  
Notes few and strong and fine,  
Gilt with sweet day's decline,  
And sad with promise of a different sun."

Mr. Patmore and his poems were " insolent," but in the brave Elizabethan sense of the word ; proud with the just pride of clear vision and Uranian compulsion to utterance. . . . A character so definite, a temperament so unique fill us with delight : the mystic, bathing his soul in

the poetry of Catholic theology; the ferocious politician, whose superior Toryism scorned that of "the false English nobles and their Jew"; the man of ascetic silence and monstrous jests and smiling arrogances, whose intolerance was "very tolerable and not to be endured"! . . . "The greatest genius of the century," says Mr. Francis Thompson. Be that as it may, and the assertion does not startle us, it is very certain that Patmore, the friend of Carlyle, Ruskin, Newman, Tennyson, Rossetti, Browning, was at least the intellectual equal of them all, though he deliberately did much that prevented the world from thinking so. He was not always justified or judicious in his manner of saying, with Landor, "I know not whether I am proud, But this I know: I hate the crowd." Nor in his manner of echoing Ben Jonson's resolve to "sing high and aloof, Safe from the black wolf's jaw and the dull ass's hoof." A public which takes *The Angel in the House* for a mildly pleasing domestic tale in facile verse, and *The Unknown Eros* for a cluster of obscurities in an unknown tongue, will scarce agree with Mr. Thompson. But Mr. Champneys' biography should do much towards inducing that public to revise its verdicts, and to recognise in Mr. Patmore, if not all that his best lovers find in him, yet a strenuous and victorious servant of poetry in the highest, of faith aflame. That "distinction," which he so greatly loved and craved in life and art (a fine flower within the reach of all, and not the ornament of an elect class) appears in his dealings with the commonest things; he revered humanity, whence he inferred, wherein he discerned, divinity. His fastidiousness of life, his sometimes extravagant expression of it sprang from the vehemence of his personality, from a half-humorous conviction that he did well to be angry and to spare not. Many of the odes of *The Unknown Eros* are passionately compassionate, and tremulous unto tears: no man ever knew with a profounder knowledge the pangs of loss, dereliction, desire, sorrows of soul and body in their

mystical conjunction. But a severe serenity, a radiant haughtiness, a righteous impatience, find frequent and emphatic expression. "*Noli me tangere*," he has said, "is the only favour which the poet also seems to ask, and which does not tend to popularity." The spiritual mystic, the intellectual aristocrat, have other delights than that: the author of those challenging and defiant works, *Principle in Art*, *Religio Poetae*, and *Rod, Root, and Flower*, was not ill-contented to dwell apart in the sphere of his own delights, ascending the *Scala Santa* of saints and sages.

Detachment marked him, but not detachment from an abundance of such worldly interests as politics, building, farming, fishing, to which he brought Carlylean and most virile vigour. His home life is described by Mr. Champneys with pleasant humour, and reticence, and just appreciation, in pages which are very much alive: the man, here portrayed, will charm readers whom the poet may puzzle. The special chapters upon members of his family, discreetly written, serve well to illustrate the finer characteristics of his life and aims, ardent, resolute, filled with much joy and sorrow. But it is not a biography which fairly admits of quotation: Mr. Patmore's life and nature must be studied as a whole, in all their various aspects. It would be easy to present strongly-marked partial views of him, all true, but not the whole truth: a few anecdotes, chosen at random, would do no sort of justice to his apparently paradoxical, but essentially consistent, character, in which piety was on the easiest terms with humour, passion with playfulness, fieriness with tenderness, spirituality with worldliness. It is both a lofty and a whimsical figure, to be contemplated with admiration and amusement and a very human sympathy: the figure of a veiled prophet, yet an intimate friend: a poet of sublimities and things celestial which came laughing from his lips, but only after long silences of meditation and waiting upon the heavenly vision. An Englishman to the core, his perceptions of reality and truth were not those

readily intelligible to his contemporary compatriots, whom he could chide, but not conciliate : his first duty was to the integrity of his own intellectual conscience ; and in matters of religion, of art, of the body politic, he uttered many a *non possumus*, even in reply to the pleas and remonstrances of friends. He loved truth, as he discerned truth, in its audacity, "terrible as an army with banners" : he could keep silence, he could not soften speech into smooth insinuations of the truth. A great part of his work, in poetry and in prose, is militant and menacing : distastefully so to dissenters in all points from his beliefs. By no means a comfortable writer, whose views we can ignore in our enjoyment of his art : we are forced to take a side, and in most matters the English world is not upon Patmore's side. He, indeed, was fond of asserting that "there are not 'two sides to every question,' nor, indeed, to any." A nation enamoured of compromise and concession, and "comprehensiveness" and "give and take," will hardly take to its heart the least condescending, the most assertive writer of our times, Carlyle and Ruskin not excepted. But we repeat that Mr. Champneys has done much to present him to a somewhat alien public, not indeed toned down and conventionalised, yet in a winning, clear, and amiable light.

Born in 1823, he died in 1896 : from early youth he lived the literary life with an ardent devotion and a singular independence, not swerving from his deliberate way, not dallying with any popular fashions, not intimidated by any misconstruction, ridicule, or neglect. Nor, except upon the score of material profit, had he cause to complain, who, beginning with the young pre-Raphaelites, never lacked the applause of his brethren, and the joy *laudari a laudatis*. He had letters of cordial, even of superlative praise from the illustrious friends whom we have mentioned, as also from Mr. Aubrey de Vere, Mr. Robert Bridges, Mr. Austin Dobson, and other living poets of eminence ; from the late Cardinals Newman and Manning, Sir Henry Taylor, Woolner,



and Allingham, the first Lord Houghton, Bell Scott, Emerson; with many more. But it is noticeable that the truest appreciation of his work, its order of ideas, comes from fellow-Catholics: from a Franciscan versed in mystical theology; from a brilliant young Jesuit poet, "dead ere his prime"; from Mr. de Vere, much of whose poetry is own cousin to Patmore's; from one of his daughters, a nun. These knew what he knew, felt what he felt, moved in the same or in a similar sphere of Catholic experience; for these, though "in a strange land," this was "the Lord's song." Patmore's creed can never be overlooked in the consideration of his poems, even of those preceding his conversion to Catholicism; in a few autobiographical pages, now first published, he describes that change, which, in a sense, was no change, but the crowning of old convictions by the hand of authority. As a Catholic, he found no rash or erroneous phrase or thought in *The Angel in the House*; the one central fact of love human and divine, with its incalculable corollaries, which was to him the justification of faith and the interpretation of life, was there celebrated in language less august, but not less true, than that of the *Odes*, where the flight is higher, the light more "clear-obscure."

"Views of the unveil'd heavens alone forth bring  
Prophets who cannot sing,  
Praise that in chiming numbers will not run:  
At least, from David unto Dante, none,  
And none since him."

But if Patmore forgot Calderon, we do not forget Patmore; who, to the fires and fervours of Crashaw, added a spiritual learning, unknown to that seraphic poet, and is the chief poet of modern Catholicism, the chief priest of sacred song. It separates him from his most famous friends among English writers of the century, and prevents his just acceptance; it is impossible to prophesy the future of the fame of such a man. Should, to use a current French phrase, "the bankruptcy of science" become more and more an

accomplished fact, it may be that his chaunted doctrines will work their way into minds emptied of their old principles, and fill up the painful void: it may be that his peculiar music and mastery of metre would count for much in "the poetry of the future." At present it cannot be said that Coventry Patmore holds *de facto* that place in the public estimation which is his *de jure*.

"I love you, dear, but the Lord is my Life and my Light," were his dying words to his wife: and "but" might have been "therefore."

From first to last he sang the mystical glory and meaning of the most sacred among human relationships, fearlessly and simply; the heights of humanity were the starting-point of his song. That also must make for permanence. But it is hard to write of him: at every turn of his life, on every page of his writings, we find ourselves in presence of human and divine relationships, entered into by himself with an intense simplicity and purity of heart, but hardly to be spoken of by others, nor dwelt upon but with anxious delicacy. It is good to bear in mind that this poet and prophet of such mysteries, self-dedicated by his own genius to their exaltation, had nothing of that morbid or hectic quality which is so often the danger of the mystic. In this book there is the dweller upon the heights: there is also the man who could say to its writer: "I said seven *Aves* for you to catch that fish!" and the man who had an exemplary relish of "creature comforts," of practical occupations, of every-day life in the land, with its pungent political pessimism foredoomed to damnation; the man who wrote not only of the heavenliest sanctities, but also "How I Managed and Improved my Estate," and trenchant "topical" articles for his friend Mr. Frederick Greenwood. Like almost all the greater saints of his Church, he loved laughter and epigram, and truth fortified with jesting: he prized the discipline of sorrow, but he loathed melancholy. "For all things there is a time," and when

it was not his time for the higher and the hidden things he had no contempt for the lower, which, after all, are not low. And, finally, it is not only in these welcome pages that the whole man is to be found: he is in his noblest work, where awe encourages delight, and eternal strength quickens temporal weakness. The breadth and happy peace and flying radiance of the skies are in his poetry, and airs of Paradise regained. Some great poetry has been written in his time, but none of more refined a music, of more impassioned a sincerity, of more beautiful a wisdom.

## MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF

[*The Anti-Jacobin*, Oct. 10, 1891.]

HAD the diaries and letters of Mdle. Bashkirtseff been the work of another woman, she would have criticised them something in this manner:—"I have read the celebrated diary, the wonderful letters. Oh, the happy woman! To long, long, long for things all her life, and to die of consumption! the beautiful death! at twenty-three! That is my idea of success in this terrible world. To long passionately for fame, adoration, triumph; and to die before she found out that there is nothing, nothing, nothing, in all the world! I am mad with jealousy. Oh, my God! help me, Thou! That is quite a simple prayer. They have not sent home my white dress, and to-night the Prince will think me hideous: he, with his drooping moustache and pale brow! Oh! the poor girl that I am. And she, the other, had so much! And Aunt Mary has actually forgotten to have the dogs washed."

The journal and the letters of Mdle. Bashkirtseff have won the admiration of this singular age by utterances precisely in that tone and style. So frank, so fearless, so human, so true: veritable records of a mind touched by all our modern influences: those wonderful influences which

no one will be good enough to explain, which every one "in the movement" is only too anxious to experience. After reading these volumes, the poor disbeliever in the movement is left with a sense of profound disgust. Silly petulance, ill-bred ostentation, unfathomable conceit, offensive vulgarity, and no trace of affection or of thought : these are the gifts and qualities which we are called upon to study and to admire. Fine phrases are invented for it : the revelation of a soul, the true history of a modern mind, the exhibition in all their crudity of passions and desires, hopes and despairs, which modesty or shame is accustomed to conceal. Few persons have gone to the extreme of asking us to admire Mdlle. Bashkirtseff : she was vain, foolish, and so forth : but then she did not mind saying so ! And the spectacle of a young Russian lady suffering the *maladie de siècle*, and boldly exposing its symptoms to the world, is a spectacle that appeals to our sympathies or excites our curiosity. So say the wise teachers of our time. But apart from the sorry taste evinced in admiration of these writings, we can but wonder at the surprise and excitement felt over them. For the explanation of their character is perfectly simple, and nothing new. Every man, by the natural constitution of his mind, thinks about his thoughts, and not only is conscious of his emotions, but has a further consciousness of that consciousness. Take a man at his devotions, a man of real and simple religious nature : he performs them with perfect sincerity, but he is also conscious of his devotional emotion, as though he were a dispassionate critic outside himself. Look at a beautiful scene or work of art : you genuinely admire and enjoy, but you also reflect upon your admiration and enjoyment. And the process may be indefinitely prolonged. A man who is perpetually analysing his motives, thinking of his thoughts, examining his emotions, runs a fair chance of becoming imbecile : but the process is none the less a natural one. Some years ago a Catholic priest wrote an account of his novitiate in a religious order.

At the ceremony of profession it was customary for the prior to crown the professed with white flowers. The writer says : " Even at that solemn moment the ludicrous could not be entirely banished, and the thought of my bald head and grizzled tonsure called up irresistibly thoughts of Greek philosophers at a symposium, and inspired me with a frantic desire to conclude the ceremony." That is innocent enough, but to encourage this natural tendency of reflection till it becomes a very torment of perpetual self-consciousness, is sure to end in an unnatural state of mind. Mdle. Bashkirtseff, being by nature quick and keen of mind, became, in sober truth, a monomaniac, unable to think of anything but herself. In her art, her dress, her acquaintance, her every thought and feeling, she was consumed with a passion for analysing her motives and emotions, for appearing effective, for creating a situation. So that in her journal and letters there is not one single line of simple, unsophisticated writing. Yet we are told of her spontaneous, genuine, frank confessions : of her yearning for a great life, for fame, for manifold experience. Hers is only a case of childish precocity, bad training, and consequent craziness.

She visits Père Didon, the great Dominican. " One would like to see him with a moustache. One can see plainly that he is fully aware of his popularity, that he is accustomed to adoration ; that he is sincerely delighted with the sensation he creates everywhere !" So *naïve* ! and so penetrating ! She goes to confession : and because it was " singular " she records its details in her diary with a positive relish. She writes to her mother : " I am going to tell you about my childish doings. This morning I went for a walk and entered a Catholic church. I availed myself of the absolute solitude of the place to go up into the pulpit, to go into the choir, to go on the altar " (surely a mis-translation here), " and to read the prayers placed on the tablet of the altar : I did all this by way of prayer, for I have a multitude of projects in which I need the assistance

of Heaven. But the thought that I have read a Mass transports me! Only think, I rang the bell as the priests do during Mass!" (They do not: but no matter.) "At all events my intentions were not bad."

So much for Mdlle. Bashkirtseff's religion, which does not seem to have been one of her more cherished emotions. It is in her letters to her relatives, mother, grandfather, brother, that the perfection of her trivial selfishness appears. She informs a friend that "Mamma was very good to-day. In the end I really believe I shall grow fond of her." She leaves her mother to go to Paris, against her mother's wish. "I am a naughty girl; I left my mother, saying I was delighted to depart with my uncle. That made her feel unhappy, and people do not know how much I love her, and they judge me by appearances. Oh! according to appearances I am not very affectionate." That is very true: her affections never display themselves in deeds. She leaves her grandfather without taking any notice of him, and explains that she did it in her hurry to get away. She worries her aunt with perpetual clamour for money, and with perpetual commissions about her dresses and her dogs. To her father: "You have always been prejudiced against me, although I have never done anything to justify such a feeling on your part. I have never lost the love and esteem for you, however, which every well-born girl owes to her father." To her brother she sends an elaborate description of her dress: "A gown of a clinging and elastic material that modestly revealed the outline of my figure": "you should be proud, my dear boy, to have a sister like me." But the most unpleasant things in the book are her accounts of men and of her interest in them. She is enchanted with the coarse admiration of strangers who stare at her in the theatre, or follow her in the streets. She describes them with the vulgar silliness of a romantic shop-girl. One of them "is dark, has very fine eyes, a slight drooping moustache, a velvety skin, such as I do not think I have ever

before seen in a man ; a handsome mouth, a regular nose, neither round nor pointed, nor aquiline nor classic—a nose of which, too, the skin is delicate, a thing which is exceedingly rare,” etc. Then there are her letters to distinguished writers unknown to her, more foolish and impertinent than one could have thought possible. Of *Faust* she writes that “the subject is disgusting. I do not say immoral, hideous : I say *disgusting*.” And that is what we say of her letters. They disgust us, because they are so hopelessly foolish and so unspeakably undignified : so full of petulant vanity and of pretentious affectation. Arnold said of a certain letter by Keats, that “it is the sort of love-letter of a surgeon’s apprentice which one might hear read out in a breach of promise case, or in the Divorce Court.” These letters are the letters of an hysterical lady’s-maid in point of manner, of an undisciplined female novelist in point of matter. To paraphrase Arnold, “they have in their relaxed self-abandonment something underbred and ignoble, as of a girl ill brought up, without the training which teaches us that we must put some constraint upon our feelings and upon the expression of them.” And Mdlle. Bashkirtseff was very badly brought up : that is obvious. It would have been a saving discipline for her to have known the severity of wise parents, or even of cruel : she might have learned endurance, if not reverence.

To those who affect an admiration of her character let us suggest the question : What would life become were most women like Mdlle. Bashkirtseff ? Could any man wish to have a wife, a daughter, a sister, like her ? Is it for her qualities that any man honours and loves his mother ? Philistine questions, but worth asking. And if the answer must be No, how are we to justify this fervent interest in a diseased and silly soul ?

Such souls are merely miserable, pitiable : not admirable nor estimable. It is in vain for them, as Massillon has it, “*se consoler d’une passion par une autre passion nouvelle ;*

*d'une perte par un nouvel attachement ; d'une disgrâce par de nouvelles espérances ; l'amertume les suit partout ; ils changent de situation mais ils ne changent pas de supplice."*

Some lovers of extravagance and of perversion may enjoy these dismal pages, with all their outcries and affectations : to those who love the natural beauty of the natural mind, and to those who know the strength and sternness of a real sorrow, these pages must seem false and wretched, and the liking for them a melancholy sign of disordered times.

## "FATHER IZAAK"

[*The Speaker*, June 20, 1896.]

BOSWELL and Lockhart hold, by common consent, the first place in our literature as biographers upon a generous and elaborate scale : but Izaak Walton is our prince of biographers in miniature. It is wonderful that the good citizen-tradesman of Fleet Street should have entered so exquisitely into the characters of these aristocratic priests and poets, these profound scholars and theologians, these men of a deeper and a higher life than his : he seems drawn by some powerful instinct towards elect souls, towards gracious, distinguished, and ardent natures, which have a courtliness in their piety. He never could have loved, though he could have partly respected, the tinker Bunyan, or the political dissenter Defoe, his brother writers of homely and vivid English : he required more than a touch of comely convention in his heroes. For a like reason, he could not have wholly comprehended the passionate Catholic converts of his day, with their fiery fervours and devoutnesses. Extremes distressed the good quiet man : as his pleasant meadows, and silver streams, and gentle winds suited him better than wild storm upon moor or mountain, so, too, the sober decency of Anglicanism, the graceful side of Stuart monarchy, the pleasing dignity



and moderate enjoyments of an ordered and measured life, were more to his taste than your ranting fanaticism and indecent innovation. There is something in him—yes, positively!—of the sweet, old-fashioned, gentle old lady, to whom "the modern spirit" is a thing of noise and of ill manners, and who "cannot understand" how anyone can wish to change the good old ways. Father Izaak has just such an one's placid charm and sometimes humorous speech: the shrewdness of a prejudice not bitter, but disarming. And Walton loved excellently well, choosing men and things of true worth to praise: you never find him worse than a little narrow and blind in an innocent way. Utterly unlike Carlyle in all else, he had, what Carlyle noted for praise in Boswell, the instinctive recognition not only of a great but of a good man. His most lovable glow of admiration for his saintly heroes and pious gentlemen sets one thinking of Scott's last words to Lockhart: "Be a good man, my dear!" And, good as were Herbert, Hooker, Wotton, Sanderson, Donne, their eulogist was fully as good himself, and, in his own phrase about old songs, "choicely good."

He is among the prettiest of antique writers, with his ingenuous gossip, his charming freshness, his touches of singular beauty, his perfect rise and fall between eloquence and colloquialism: it is admirably effective writing in its simplicity and earnestness. Not one of the *Lives* was written for fame, artistic or historic, but from a single-hearted desire to preserve and embalm the memories of worthies, of pattern men, exemplars and ensamples of "holy living and holy dying." . . . The choice of anecdotes and sayings, the personal touches, the general setting of the portraits, produce a wonderful effect of reality. Five men, all ecclesiastics and scholars, of very much the same opinions in Church and State: yet their points of dissimilarity in agreement are made manifest with no common cunning: they are flesh and blood, not "characters." Herbert is

Herbert, not the "country parson": Wotton is himself, no mere type of the courtly and accomplished public man. Take, for a specimen of well-chosen incident, Wotton's journey to his old school, Winchester, the last year of his life: how we see the old man, with years and honours and cares upon him, moralising over the young scholars with a smiling sadness! Or Herbert, with his punctilious daintiness of attire, soiling and disordering it in his succour of the poor man's horse on the way to Salisbury: we see him enter the music-meeting in the Close, surprising his friends by his ruffled appearance, "which used to be so trim and clean": we hear a friend reproach him for "disparaging himself by so dirty an employment," and his answer that "the thought of what he had done would prove music to him at midnight," with the rest of his little homily, ending in "and now let's tune our instruments." And the marriage of injudicious Hooker! for quaint, wholesome comedy it is unsurpassed. His two pupils visit him at his parsonage, and find him reading Horace in the field among his sheep, his wife having set the man to help her in the house: when he is released, and they go indoors, "where their best entertainment was his quiet company," they fare no better, "for Richard was called to rock the cradle; and the rest of their welcome was so like this, that they stayed but till next morning, which was time enough to discover and pity their tutor's condition." Henpecked Richard rocking the cradle, with the *Ecclesiastical Polity* in his head, and his domestic polity thus deplorable! To take a prettier picture, which Mr. Hardy might have painted, imagine Hooker "of so mild and humble a nature that his poor parish clerk and he did never talk but with both their hats on, or both off, at the same time." These are but the little sallies and relaxations by which Walton humanises and brightens his serious story: he has no lack of concern for its higher side. A piece of quiet humour is like his angling, no chief part of his business, but a

harmless recreation. What he most sets himself to display and extol is the humility, meekness, "Christian moderation," of his men: to that he is ever recurring, as the very salt of their dispositions. Donne "was by nature highly passionate": Herbert, so his deistical brother of Cherbury tells us, was "not exempt from passion and choler, being infirmities to which all our race is subject"; and indeed, both parson-poets being Welshmen, we can well believe it: but Walton loves to show them triumphing over pride and passion. To him, cherishing peace and goodwill and cheerfulness, the stormy times must have been sore and sad: and to deal with these great sweet memories of "holy and humble men of heart" was a solace and a fragrance. Each "Life" has its peculiar charm. Those of Herbert and Donne, as beseems divine poets, are the most rich in religious emotion: the live coal from the altar has touched the writer's lips. Those of Hooker and Sanderson, as becomes massive theologians, one magnificent and the other eminent, are more elaborate, stately, and complete. That of Wotton, courtier, ambassador, poet, ecclesiastic, collegiate dignitary, is the most mundane and secular, the least imaginative and moving. And the issue of them all is an extraordinary affection for Walton. These great Churchmen seem, indeed, in Wordsworth's phrase,

"Satellites burning in a lucid ring  
Around meek Walton's heavenly memory":

their destiny was not only to be great themselves, but to reveal a true greatness of nature in the "linendraper" who wrote of them. For his gift of appreciation and of reverence betokens somewhat in him akin to the virtues which he hailed in them. It takes a saint, the saying runs, to write the lives of saints. These good Anglican divines are not saints, but their Church has produced few saintlier men than some of them: and Walton was to the full worthy of celebrating them. In his old-world simplicity and content,

his cheerful piety and peace, Walton illustrates the true English Toryism, which is the monopoly of no party: he does so upon the homelier, humbler side, as Burke upon the public and the national. We all agree with the comic Boswell, that he is "most pleasingly edifying"; with Lamb, that his *Angler* "would sweeten a man's temper at any time . . . would Christianise every discordant, angry passion." Reverence and cheerfulness are his notes; and he lived from the last Tudor to the last Stuart, from the Armada almost to the Revolution! His was not the Olympian calm of Goethe in times of national confusion, the scientific absorption of Archimedes or of Hegel, the strangely marked aloofness of his contemporary Herrick; he simply went his way, watching and praying for happier times, yet thankful for the constant goodness of his God, Who sends flowers and birds, with all manner of delights, and right proper days to go a-fishing. There are the rare sermons of Dr. Donne, that choice song of worthy Sir Henry Wotton, these divine strains of holy Mr. Herbert; there is the society and the wit of "hearty, cheerful Mr. Cotton": there is clerical converse with his kinsfolk at Winchester, and excellent clear chalk streams. And always there rise the memories of his most esteemed friends, whose lives he can write, whose deaths he trusts to imitate. It is *Sursum Corda* with him, and a perpetual *Te Deum*; and his philosophy is in these lines by the saintly Platonist, Dr. Henry More:

"Power, Wisdome, Goodnesse, sure did frame  
This Universe; and still guide the same:  
But Thoughts from Passion sprung deceive  
Vaine Mortalls: Noe Man can contrive  
A better Race than what's been runne  
Since the first Circuit of the Sunne."

Which is true, though Voltaire or Schopenhauer rage never so furiously.

## THE STRAIN OF MYSTICISM IN THE ENGLISH

[*The Speaker*, Sept. 22, 1894.]

A GENERAL truth seems to be that whilst formal mysticism (the mysticism of Germany and Spain) has been uncongenial to the English mind, yet that a free mystical strain has run through English literature. English religion, since the Reformation, can boast of the Cambridge Platonists and of Leighton and Law, among the "orthodox"; of Fox and Bunyan, Wesley and Irving, among the nobler "schismatics"; of countless queer and pathetic bodies, Muggletonians and the like, such as flourish among us still, swelling the "varieties of Protestantism." But it is in English letters, rather than in English religion, that something mystical has prevailed; something which warrants M. Brunetière in saying that while French literature expresses the *communis sensus* of the world, English gives voice to personal vagaries, strange idiosyncrasies, individual emotions, the lyrical cries and private thoughts of isolated single souls. In the last century, English writers were for establishing a check against the spirit of lawlessness, or of each man's being "a law unto himself": they did great and good things, but in that they failed. To-day, English literature has all the extravagance and individualism of the Elizabethan. French writers have no sense of mystery: even the French mystics, a Francis of Sales, a Fénelon, a Madame Guyon, have none. They are touching, and melting, and moving, sometimes majestic and superb; but there is no feeling of awe, no shudder and thrill, either of agony or of ecstasy, when reading them. And the poets, the orators, the historians and romance-writers of France are in like case. Chateaubriand and Michelet, Hugo and Lacordaire, Renan and Balzac, Mirabeau and Diderot, Baudelaire and Rousseau,—there is not one line in them

which gives us the sense of an everlasting wonder and a fearful joy. But Langland is an early chief of a great company, among whom are Wesley and Shelley, Blake and Browning, Cowper and Carlyle, Coleridge and Newman. M. Jusserand traces the strain of semi-mystical emotion, common to them all, to the Germanic element in the English race. But, thanks to the fusion of races, the mingling, as Arnold eloquently explains, of Celt and Teuton and Scandinavian, the English race has neither the metaphysical turn of the Germans, nor the idealism of the Celt undiluted and pure; the two combine, and have created a literature of beautiful mysticism, a literature full of strangeness and propensity, of thought quivering with emotion. In Tennyson's phrase, our poets "follow the Glean." . . . No passage of Hugo's greatest verse, magnificent and resonant, rings so true and pierces so deep as do Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" lines, or some of Shakespeare's sonnets. Take the late Mr. Pearson's *National Life and Character*: it is lucid, systematic, unrhetical, a book of statistics, of scientific induction, of historical comparison; yet what a sense of the mystery of things, what a feeling for the strangeness of human fortunes, the lots, issues, and struggles of mortality! The English distaste for logic springs from the instinctive conviction that logic cannot get to the heart of anything: the conviction that animated Burke in pleading for Ireland, and against the French Revolution. "All shallows are clear," said Johnson, when one praised the clearness of Hume; and in the same century Butler and Berkeley poured scorn upon the facile coffee-house sceptic who never recognized the heights and depths of existence.

"Thus God hath willed,  
That man, when fully skilled  
Still gropes in twilight dim:  
Encompassed all his hours,  
By fearfullest powers  
Inflexible to him."

It is this recognition of a mystery in the world, however vaguely and variably felt, which forbids one to believe that Englishmen will ever accept purely "scientific and secular" principles of individual or of social life. English literature has been wont to take the side of faith in unseen realities. Not all the forces of material desire and material comfort, of national pride and social dissatisfaction, have been able to turn the face of England towards the way that ends in the anarchy of atheism and the atheism of anarchy.

## CANT

[*The Anti-Jacobin*, Aug. 22, 1891.]

DR. JOHNSON is commonly said to have said: "Clear your mind of *cant*." Good advice, but not Dr. Johnson's. He said, with far deeper wisdom: "Clear your *mind* of *cant*." He saw no great harm in foolish talk, but infinite harm in foolish thought. That, in other words, was the doctrine of Plato. "The lie in the soul," the lie without knowledge, is disastrous; the conscious lie, the verbal lie, implies no fundamental error of mind or soul. So, again, Bacon laid down that "it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt." In the same way theologians hold that not the wrong deed, but the thought of the wrong-doer, is the heinous part of crime. And when a man, thinking himself right, does wrong, that man is dangerous indeed.

But public opinion seems to be changing upon these matters; and if you say, think, or do the most injurious things, a plea of good intention, or of ignorance, or of obedience to conscience, will avail you with a multitude of emotional thinkers. You did what you thought right; honestly, you knew no better. Your conscience had a fatal twist; it is not as if you had done deliberate wrong. And you will be petted and protected, and wrapped round in

your delusion ; your mind will remain clouded with cant. In politics, in art, in religion, this cant in the guise of truth is pernicious beyond words ; and politics, including all social matters, art, including all intellectual matters, religion, including all spiritual matters, are the three chief concerns of man.

We all remember Mr. Burchell in *The Vicar of Wakefield* and the immortal talk of the fashionable ladies, punctuated by his exclamation of Fudge ! Let us try Cant instead. "All landlords are robbers." Cant ! "All Socialists are thieves." Cant ! "The Pope is a bloody tyrant." Cant ! "Protestants are atheists at heart." Cant ! "French novelists are profligates." Cant ! "English novelists are prudes." Cant !

No doubt a man may utter those sentiments and do no great harm. Say to him : "You don't mean that," and he may reply : "Well, there are exceptions," or "Of course it's an exaggeration." It is a pity to make sweeping assertions of the kind ; but so long as you do not hold them for first principles and for invincible truths, you will be harmless enough, because you will not act upon them. But if such sentiments are the source of your action, the inspiration of your conduct, the watchwords of your life, you will be an incalculable nuisance. The last century would have called you an enthusiast ; the present century ought to call you a fanatic. The older term is the better ; enthusiasm means nothing but inspired frenzy, that is, a madness of heart and soul, and infinitely strong. Insanity may do great things, and be the gift of the gods ; but wise men will always prefer sanity. When the last century praised a man for high and ardent thoughts it called him "generous," it praised his "liberality" of mind and his "elevation" of soul. The words mean all that is refined and chivalrous, open and free, high and aspiring. "Enthusiasm" implies a bondage and a compulsion. The generous man is full of light, reason, serenity ; the enthusiastic man, of bedazzlement,



impulse, passion. And these are the most honoured qualities in our day, which loves noise and glare.

Go into Hyde Park on a Sunday afternoon ; hear the enthusiasts ! Look at the faces of the orators : here is a pale, thin face, glowing with conviction ; there a strong, square face, rugged with energy ; there a dull quiet face, pathetic in its sincerity. And the voices : one rancorous with animosity, one thrilling with passion, one struggling for utterance. The listener lounges past, amused by the uneducated appeals to his reason, his conscience, his prejudice, and his purse. " Let them talk : a safety valve ! " Well, it may be ; but I am not altogether amused by these denunciations of everything in heaven and earth. That half-shaven evangelist believes with an intense conviction than I am an idolater, that my religion is a curse and a pestilence ; yet he could not correctly state one doctrine that I hold. Or that sarcastic gentleman in his shirt-sleeves, roaring like a bull, he calls me a grinder of the faces of the poor, a devourer of other men's bread, a pampered idler. Or that ecstatic person, who will have it that each glass I drink helps forward the ruin of my country and of my soul. This is very terrible : those things were not said at Cana in Galilee. And here is a persuasive Pharisee, who says that if I read a French novel, or look at a picture from the nude, my mind becomes poisoned and corrupt. Dear sir, if you are logical, you will blind and deafen me for my salvation.

" Let 'em talk." Certainly ; but is it no more than talk ? I know it is neither reason nor sense ; but I am afraid it is sincere thought of a kind. Those good people would, many of them, die for their doctrines ; they are not all impostors, agitators, screaming themselves into notice. " Clear your mind of cant." The misfortune is that these fanatics are thorough-going believers in their own inspiration. Go up to the preacher of total abstinence ; ask him to be less vehement and sweeping. He will refuse to abandon

"one inch of his ground, one fraction of his principles." Speak courteously to that scourge of Papists. Say something about charity, and throw in a word or two about mis-statements : in vain. "What the Lord hath put into his mouth, that only can he speak." As he answers you, you see the fierce determination of the man ; and his little band of followers nod at each other. Away they go, banners flying, trumpets braying, and people say : "Beautiful ! in this cynical age to see men capable of fervour and conviction." And if any one ventures a word of criticism he is shrieked against for a superior and selfish cynic. "Let's cry all together in the streets, and we're safe to get the moon," says General Booth. "I fear not," says Mr. Huxley ; "you had best stop that unseemly noise." And the chorus goes up : "Scientific, selfish, cold-blooded, calculating cynic !" Well, if noise be a common necessary of modern life, let all who are trying to save their souls without losing their heads answer the shrieking crew : "Clear your mind of cant."

## BURKE

[*The Academy*, July 16, 1898.]

THIS year is Burke's centenary ; and never had English men of letters so literary a statesman to honour. We think of him as the champion of justice to Ireland, India, and America ; as the reformer of wrongs and abuses at home ; as the prophet of wrath and woe to revolutionary France ; but we think of him, at least not less often, as the friend of Johnson and Goldsmith, of Reynolds and Garrick ; as the patron of Barry and Crabbe ; as a member of The Club, as one of the most living and immortal figures in Boswell. Burke, thundering in Westminster Hall against Warren Hastings, is not more notable to us than Burke among his friends, "winding into his subject," as Goldsmith puts it, "like a serpent," and proving himself

Johnson's only rival in flow of argument and illustration. He was no Pitt, destined to the premiership from his cradle, and lisping politics in childhood; Burke "commenced author," and turned politician, with a mind richly cultured by the humanities and by observation of men. As Arnold says of him, he was "almost alone among Englishmen in bringing thought to bear upon politics and in saturating politics with thought." For that very reason, he is a permanent force in the world of political thought, while his own age found him puzzling, inconsistent, prickly to handle. His political contemporaries busied themselves with the most immediate details of the political moment. Burke could not treat of the simplest question unless *sub specie æternitatis* and in the light of high ideas, with a mind full of the past and foreseeing the future. Never did statesman bring to a practical mastery of facts so vast a power of poetic and philosophical imagination, so great a command of moral vision. It was his weakness as an orator: harsh of voice, ungainly of gesture, he poured forth profundities of high wisdom in a profusion of over-rushing eloquence, until he wearied the intellectual few and confounded the unintellectual many. His writings are greater than his speeches, great as those are; and we may feel very confident that we, who read his speeches, admire them more passionately than did our ancestors, who heard them. We can follow at our lonely leisure the miracle of cunning logic that runs through that other miracle of golden eloquence; we can discern the stately structure, the high-wrought design, the imperial composition, better than even the most illustrious of those who watched that tall, gaunt figure with its whirling arms, and listened to the Niagara of words bursting and shrieking from those impetuous lips. The impassioned Irishman who took all human nature, all human history, for his province, was not the most appropriate orator for an audience of Georgian squires and placemen; they may not have appreciated Fox

and Sheridan and Pitt, but at the least they must have found them more intelligible, more comfortable speakers. For Burke's oratory, rapid and fervent as it was, and infinitely emotional, was yet literature ; it has no sonorous commonplace, no re-iteration of one argument in a thousand forms, none of the devices so necessary for attracting and then holding the attention, for awakening and then keeping the intelligence, of an audience. On the contrary, it is compact of continuous and progressive reasoning ; its copiousness of illustration, its wealth of imaginative phrasing, are not rhetorical embellishments to delight the hearers, but the inevitable luxuriance of a full and fertile mind, from which *nihil humani alienum*, which caught inspiration from all regions of its knowledge and experience. Said Johnson, in ill-health : " That fellow calls forth all my powers ; were I to see Burke now, it would kill me." If the prince of talkers felt that, it seems probable that the House of Commons felt somewhat stunned and overwhelmed by the serried array of Burke's thoughts and words, so numerous, yet all so necessary. For—think of it!—to Irish eloquence and imagination he added English common-sense, and enriched both with wide scholarship, with various learning, with liberal culture. We have the result of it in a series of orations which are among the choicest glories of literature. Whether as orator or as writer, Burke stands in the great succession : he was almost the last legitimate descendant of Hooker, Bacon, Milton, Taylor, Browne, of the men who used the English tongue with fearless magnificence, with " pomp and prodigality," glorying to reveal its richness of majestic music. His most eminent contemporaries, Hume and Gibbon, and even Johnson, seem absolutely of our day beside him : to find his like, we must look on to De Quincey, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Lamb. But they were, more or less, deliberate imitators of the English ancients : Burke's royal utterance was native to his tongue. Like Hooker, he revered and

extolled the sanctity of Law; and can we not easily imagine Burke, not Hooker, author of the most famous praise of Law?

“Of Law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world : all things in heaven and earth do her homage, the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempt from her power ; both angels and men, and all creatures of what condition soever, though each in different sort and manner, yet all with uniform consent, admiring her as the mother of their peace and joy.”

This is not only the doctrine of Burke, but it is the style in which, at his noblest moments, he loved to write. The Commonwealth, he writes, is consecrated :

“This consecration is made, that all who administer in the government of men, in which they stand in the person of God Himself, should have high and worthy notions of their function and destination ; that their hope should be full of immortality ; that they should not look to the paltry pelf of the moment, nor to the temporary and transient praise of the vulgar, but to a solid permanent existence in the permanent part of their nature, and to a permanent fame and glory in the example they leave as a rich inheritance to the world.”

Burke denounces a “regicide peace” with the stately vehemence of Milton defending an earlier regicide: he habitually thought in “that large utterance of the early gods,” but with less of extravagance, more of judgment. There is no English which carries the reader more irresistibly forward than the spacious and goodly English of Burke, as it sweeps and surges on its imperious way.

When Mr. Aubrey de Vere asked Tennyson whether he were a Conservative, the poet answered : “I am for progress, and would conserve the hopes of men.” A splendid confession of faith, and very Burke. He had an intense feeling for the betterment of mankind, but upon the *antiquæ viæ* : he loved reformation, hated innovation. To him there was a mysterious divinity hedging the very existence of civilised societies : behind legal enactment, and social

usage, and public order, lay no purely natural origin or principle of growth and life, but "something far more deeply interfused": *θεῖον τὸν*. He speaks of the State, the Commonwealth, in terms of reverent awe commonly reserved for the Church: be the inherited form of government what it may, it is to him the Ark of the Covenant. That "metaphysical," or "mechanical," or "mathematical" systems and theories should usurp the august place of long-descended wisdom, realised and energising through a thousand channels, was a nightmare in his eyes. He was a devotee of facts, patent and established; he appealed to no ideals of Cloud-Cuckoo-Town, but to the circumstances and conditions that he found about him. In a fine sense, he was the prophet of expediency. If certain treatment of the American Colonies, of the Irish Catholics, was visibly ruinous and morally wrong, he cared nothing for demonstrations that it was legally, technically justified; he was always for considering the "nature and necessities" of the case. Viewing the world with eyes trained to see it "steadily and whole," he had no patience with extremes; "the rights of man lie in a middle." We must give and take. The one thing fatal is to insist upon rigid adherence to any abstract principle, axiom, proposition, up in the air, rather than to the visible and tangible facts, clothed with flesh and blood, among which we live. To reject the past, to become a voluntary *parvenu* and orphan, to long for a vulgar *nouvelle richesse* in principles and institutions, is to make yourself a sorry and shivering spectacle before the angels. Burke was both reformer and reactionary, but always consistent; from first to last he fought for the reform or the improvement of society; but let it go unreformed and unimproved, if reform and improvement meant radical innovation. His temper was much that of Erasmus and More in the sixteenth century. Reform the Church! Yes, with all our hearts! but if reformation mean deformation, and to purify the Church be to unchurch it,

no! To Burke the horror of the French Revolution lay in its wanton destruction of ancient ties with the national past, its ruthless waste of venerable institutions. He was no sentimentalist aghast at bloodshed and spoliation, deeply as they moved him. With his friend Goldsmith he would not be content to mourn over the picturesque desolation of "Sweet Auburn," its ruined gardens and crumbling cottages; he, too, would find the real sorrow in the fact that

"—a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied."

When Jacobins rapturously destroyed what no power could supply,—a truth acknowledged by Carlyle—Burke mourned with a more than Jacobinical intensity. But he brought the same intensity of protest against the mad Toryism which, relying upon prescriptive right, insisted upon wronging British America: in each case he saw things as they in truth were, not with distorted vision. It was clearness of vision to discern what was, which gave him "something like prophetic strain"; half his passion proceeded from a sense of foreseeing so clearly from to-day's facts, what must be to-morrow's, while others were in judicial blindness. It is terrible to be Cassandra: and that was often Burke's exasperating lot.

But his wisdom is for all time, not for the last century. When we wish to study principles of government, of statecraft, of political philosophy, which breathe the very reality of humanity, yet are filled with a sacred spirit from "an ampler ether, a diviner air" than ours, we can turn with security to our Chrysostom of statesmen. Turgenev calls one of his creatures "the idealist of realism." With a loftier signification it is true of Burke.

## AN OLD DEBATE

[*The Anti-Jacobin*, July 18, 1891.]

SOME twenty-five miles from Bordeaux, in the hot vine-land of Gascony, stands the château of the Seigneurs de Montesquieu : a moat encircles it, inhabited by huge and greedy carp. Over the gateway runs, in letters obscured by lichen, the Horatian legend : "*O rus, quando ego te aspiciam !*" There the great President wrote his *L'Esprit des Lois* : there, in an upper chamber, is still preserved his manuscript. An eminent and worthy philosopher and noble ; whose work was the labour of twenty years, and whose style, so Gray wrote, has "the gravity of Tacitus tempered with the gaiety and fire of a Frenchman." But why runs that classic legend over the gates of a country château, and not over the gates of a Parisian hôtel ? Shall we try to answer that question ?

It is an old debate : Town or Country ! Let us take it away from sunny Gascony to England : for Town, read London. Poet, moralist, novelist, satirist, they have all recorded their thoughts upon the matter. Here is Gray : "I have been at London this month ; that tiresome, dull place ! where all people under thirty find so much amusement." Well, till our thirtieth year we have Gray's leave to enjoy London. And Walpole comes to our aid : "Dull as London is in summer, there is always more company in it than in any one place in the country." Johnson, too, "habituated himself to consider living in the country as a kind of mental imprisonment." The phrase reminds one of that phrase just now frequent upon men's lips in London : "When shall you get away ?" as though London were some hated dungeon out of which to break. We turn to Lamb : "Enchanting London !" he cries : "Oh, her lamps of a night !" A splendid enthusiasm is there in that brief sentence. "All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. As least I know an alchemy that turns her



mud into that metal, a mind that loves to be at home in crowds." And he writes to Wordsworth, who never learned the lesson: "The wonder of these sights impels me into night walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life." Wordsworth was afraid and disquieted in London. "Thou endless stream of men and moving things!" he cried to London, in his youth, struck with a sense of helplessness. And when he would show the greatest beauty of London, and of all the earth, he chose the still morning, when that "endless stream" is at rest:

"Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still."

Sooner than live in a great city, he would have echoed the aspiration of a lady in Dickens, to "retreat to a Swiss farm, and live entirely surrounded by cows and china." Hawthorne, of all shy and lonely recluses, could write: "Whatever has been my taste for solitude and natural scenery, yet the thick, foggy, stifled element of cities, the entangled life of many men together, sordid as it was, and empty of the beautiful, took quite as strenuous a hold upon my mind. I felt as if there could never be enough of it." But quotation is endless work, or rather, infinite pleasure. Now to sage reflection.

After, let us say, Oxford, take London: after the beautiful gray city, a wilderness of sordid houses; after the little country town, a swarming capital. Yet without shame or hesitation we prefer London: prefer it for the sake of those very instincts of literature and learning which Oxford fosters. The enormous energies of London call up answering emotions in the hearts of spectators: it is the summons to a fuller life, the inspiration of a fuller understanding. Certainly, there are great trials of mind and soul for a spectator of London: the difficulty of mastering it, of seeing it "steadily and whole." For the immense activity

of London the mind has no equal energy and force : it takes the impression of vast things without realising them. And so, at first, we are troubled by a sentiment of our insufficiency : we seem to live at random, at the mercy of multitudes, in a labyrinth of ways. And the country fields, the little country towns, look so peaceful at their distance ! But all that is a false dream, natural enough to inexperienced wonder. Gradually, imperceptibly, London grows homely and familiar ; we discover ourselves again among manageable circumstances, in pleasant lights. Lamb said true : the chief part of the discovery is the growth in us of a love for crowds, for stirring life. Pascal could not comprehend those who call the pleasure of solitude incomprehensible : but that was the austere and ascetic Pascal, not the Pascal of Parisian society. In truth, loneliness is the most terrible of calamities ; the loneliness which implies, not love of meditation, but absence of sympathy. And in London, the man of letters whose business lies in the expression of life, real or touched with imagination, is quickened to action by the presence of great crowds. He assents to Suckling, most human of singers, when he sings :

“ Blackfriars to me, and old Whitehall,  
Is even as much as is the fall  
Of fountains on a pathless grove,  
And nourishes as much by love.”

To the lover of London, the noisy flaring streets are a hunting-ground of emotions, a garden of ideas. Going out into the crowded day or the tumultuous night, fresh from Apuleius or from Lucian, he will find all that ancient wit and beauty informed with new life. He wonders how Smollett would have hit off these motley humours, or how Goldsmith would have given to them a graceful sentiment, or Addison invested them with a delicate, happy charm. The more abundant and varied life be, the better for the man of letters ; it educates him. It was an excellent thing

for Coleridge to have been a dragoon ; for Gibbon to have joined the militia ; for Dante and for Hugo to have known exile. Æschylus learned much from Marathon : Goethe from the Court of Weimar. It is a pleasant wholesome thing to walk along the streets, letting no sight or word escape us, coarse or trivial : to leave at home our proper thoughts, and to join the throng. After all, other people are very companionable. Cæsar held in mistrust the lean, who think too much ; others have disliked the haters of children, of music, and of bread : for ourselves, we will be friends with no man who goes down the Strand with an *Odi profanum* on his lips. Where are your mighty orators, your biting satirists, your kindly humorists, without the "miscellany rabble" ? Cicero has a terrible expression, speaking of depopulated Italy : the *solitudo Italiae*. An intolerable sadness rings through the phrase : as though he would express not the mere absence of men, but the personal presence of desolation also ; as though Italy felt her loneliness. That is a feeling common to many places, to any place of which we can say, *vasta silentia* ! This it is which turns strong, cordial men into an Amiel or an Obermann. Nature can be made so austere, and in her very sympathy so cold : but a crowded city ! there is a treasure of rich emotion. Moving among crowds with keen eyes and open minds, we reach the feeling of a creator : we read secrets, we surprise confidences, and it is a shallow reproach which thinks evil of the discoveries of misery and wrong. Be our delight in cities and in crowds a delight in their tragedy or in their joy, it is equally an honest and a true delight.

Why runs that legend over the gates of the Gascon castle ? Did its lord love so greatly the vine-lands and the orchards of the country ? Was he sick and jaded with the hollow, courtly world, all noise and glare ? If so, a pleasant picture : like that of Pliny in his two dear retreats. But that was not so. Rather that old French Seigneur did but follow his age, and affect a love for country life. And, lest

he should forget it, he sends for the carver and bids him inscribe over the gateways that famous line of the famous Horace. A classic artifice ! Not now "in reach of sheep-bells is our home ;" but what then ? Each goes his way. Life is a grave and pleasant thing,

" Alike in some still, rural scene,  
Or Regent Street and Bethnal Green."

Many a time more we hope to go along that desolate coast at Morwenstow ; to pass over those wild moors of Merioneth. But from our London windows we shall hear, and shall love too, the murmur and the roar of London. Will anything come of it ? At least, there will come a continual delight in life, while memory last, and eyesight stay, and the hearing of the ears takes in the sound of a vast and busy world.

## HENRY VAUGHAN, SILURIST

[*The Daily Chronicle*, Dec., 1896.]

HERE is an edition of Vaughan \* which should serve to win new readers for that poet of a magnificent imagination, often of a magnificent expression, who has met with such love from a few, with such neglect from the many. Mr. Chambers and Mr. Beeching are literary scholars, whose work is always good : Mr. Chambers by his thorough knowledge and indefatigable pains, Mr. Beeching by his poet's felicity in criticism, have between them done all that is required to produce Vaughan to all advantage. But it is the poetry far more than the poet, that they have illuminated : much as they have laboured upon the life, genealogy, records of Vaughan, he remains obscure, in an appropriate retirement from the public view, cloistered and

\* *The Poems of Henry Vaughan, Silurist.* Edited by E. K. Chambers. With an introduction by H. C. Beeching. London : Lawrence and Bullen, 1896.

withdrawn within his green retreats. He died close upon the alien eighteenth century, in 1695, at the age of seventy-five; and he passed the greater part of this long life as a contemplative physician in his own "Silurist" region of Wales. Oxford and London he had known, joining in the lettered society of the time. It seems probable that he took up arms for the "White King," whose cause he idealised and loved. But that prolonged Welsh solitude and eremitical estate is the chief feature of his fortunes, and the chief prompter of his poetry. He was Wordsworthian, and even less worldly than Wordsworth, who owes him much. "One of the best men and sweetest minds of the seventeenth century," he is called by Miss Guiney, the American poetess, who has honoured well his memory; and, indeed, through his poetry, this "umbratile" poet becomes a familiar and dear friend to those who live with it.

Vaughan's work recalls Spenser's careful and authoritative definition of poetry: it is "a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both, and poured into the witte by a certaine enthusiasmos and celestiaall inspiration." When those partly fail Vaughan, as fail him they often do, he is attractive, enjoyable, interesting, but not astonishing and ravishing: when "the good spirit," as Herrick has it, is upon him in plenary power, he

"—to what height  
Towers, in his new ascension of delight!"

Imagine Wordsworth retaining his impassioned Platonism of contemplative thought, but enriching it with something of Crashaw's, or of Miss Rossetti's, refulgent religious raptures. Vaughan, at his noblest, is something like that; for amid all his ardours of devotion there is a steady strain of philosophical conceptions, his Christian Platonism, theological mysticism: he has never the feverish fire which

can go nigh to making Crashaw hysterical when he would be ecstatic. Vaughan's is the opposite danger: he comes close upon being flat and dull, when his aim is the lofty and the calm; the lines do not quiver and kindle and break into a sudden glory, but pursue an even course of conceits and fancies. He was not a Herbert, able to compose devout poems with little let or hindrance every day, "following the Church's year" with a kind of professional aptitude, and seldom falling greatly beneath his best elevations. Five or six of Herbert's greater pieces are very wonderful, yet it would have been no huge miracle had he produced a whole volume of like excellence; but a whole volume upon the celestial level of Vaughan's masterpieces would have been a very marvel of miracles, and set him among the most Uranian of poets.

"I saw Eternity the other night,  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright;  
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, and years,  
Driven by the spheres,  
Like a vast shadow moved; in which the world  
And all her train were hurled."

Had Vaughan constantly written with an imagination so august, high indeed had been his throne in the Heliconian hierarchy.

The haunting preoccupation of his mind is the divine ministry of the world, the divinity interpenetrating the universe, and ever ready, as it were, to break through the veil and flash in visible form upon those who have eyes to see, who possess the faculty of vision. To Vaughan, as to Newman in his sermon upon the powers of nature, the operations of the world are angelical: the "laws of nature" are the orderly and obedient workings of God's spirits, the business of the heavenly host. Linked with that is a longing for the ancient days, when "the youthful world's grey fathers," the "white" patriarchs and prophets, walked

and held converse with angels; yes, and with very God: days of the earth's innocence, when the dew of Eden was yet fresh. Then comes the thought of his own "white childhood," when he "shined in his angel-infancy": and all these thoughts are steeped in a mystical light caught from Plato, the "Attic Moses," who preached the "doctrine of ideas," which are almost spiritual persons, by whom and in whom are all things. He will, with Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, gaze upon streams and flowers, clouds and stars, until there break forth from them the creating indwelling spirit: for him, as for Berkeley, nature is "the visual language of God." He would have understood well the "Siris" of Berkeley, that great philosophic and theosophic treatise which "begins with tar-water and ends with the Trinity." But many poets of his time had much of his spirit, and realised with him a transcendental beauty or power in the visible: yet More of Cambridge, Norris of Bemerton, were not great poets. Wherein lies the greatness of Vaughan?

In his inspired ability to communicate high thoughts of philosophic value in terms of the imagination, in artistic phrase and form, his eyes are not "blinded with excess of light," but piercing keen and full upon the natural world. Nature to him is consecrate; he will not, because natural things are symbols, ignore them for love of what they symbolise. He shows us nature, as it indeed appears, with all the grandeur or the delicacy of its phenomenal life; but, without obscuring that phenomenal beauty, he can show it "apparelled in celestial light." His poetry glitters and glistens with a radiant purity and "candour":

"The green wood glittered with the golden sun,  
And all the west like silver shined,"

he says in his "Daphius"; and his own work is like that, magically lit. As has often been pointed out, his favourite word is "white." Now he seems to have known Welsh;

and Professor Rhys tells us that *gwyn*, the Welsh word for "white," means also holy, happy, felicitous, reverend; "white mother" is a Welsh phrase, implying at once reverence and endearment and joy upon the child's part. So with Vaughan, "white" is a word of infinite felicity. His choicer books are "kind Heaven's white decoys"; he sings of "the old white prophets"; the saints long dead are "those first white pilgrims"; in childhood he knew no evil, only "a white celestial thought"; he regrets to have no longer "those white designs which children drive"; Jacob's pastoral sons spent "calm golden evenings" and "white days"; he must live a pure life, that when "the white-winged reapers come" he may be found worthy.

"For thy eternal living wells,  
None stained or withered shall come near;  
A fresh, immortal green there dwells,  
And spotless white is all the wear."

Except for its exotic form, he might well have written Miss Rossetti's roundel, which begins:

"Whiteness most white. Ah! to be clean again  
In mine own sight and God's most holy sight!  
To reach through any flood or fire of pain  
Whiteness most white."

This well-loved epithet contains his characteristic, a paradisaical sense of bright innocence, glad and debonair amid the dewy fragrance of the garden; and upon the other side, the sullying of the whiteness, the eclipse of light, the gloom of a great storm and darkness, the blackness and heaviness of the shadow of death and sin. The present writer once began to count how often "light" and "night" rhyme together in Vaughan, but gave it up in weariness. The two words, in both literal and analogical application, are his incessant, his inveterate themes.

"A darting conscience full of stabs and fears;  
No shade but yew;  
Sullen and sad eclipses, cloudy spheres;—  
These are my due."



But He that with His blood (a price too dear)  
 My scores did pay,  
 Bid me, by virtue from Him, challenge here  
 The brightest day.  
 Sweet, downy thoughts, soft lily shades, calm streams,  
 Joys full and true,  
 Fresh, spicy mornings, and eternal beams ;—  
 These are His due."

He is passionately sincere in his poems of adoration and repentance, but never a gasping devotee or groaning pietist ; it is always "in Thy Light shall we see light," and we have glimpses of the glory now. Unlike his brother Thomas, the famous student and master of occult science, he is content with the *magia naturalis* of the world revealed by imagination and by faith. His valleys and fields suffice for him, their peacefulness and wonder :—

"They are the meek's calm region, where  
 Angels descend and rule the sphere ;  
 Where Heaven lies leiger, and the Dove  
 Duly as dew comes from above."

Earth has its own magic and enlightenment, for

"—here in dust and dirt, O here  
 The lilies of His love appear !"

We hardly regret that he had no Izaak Walton to give us the brief and happy chronicle of his days ; it is pleasant to make our own portrait of the recluse upon the banks of Usk. "An ingenious person, but proud and humorous" ; so, says Anthony à Wood, the neighbours thought him. Most Welshmen of any genius are that : we know that both George Herbert and his brother, of Cherbury, were so. But Vaughan must also have had the "pride and humours" of a man living in the lonelier ways of thought, where few could follow ; his eyes discerned, his ears caught, things viewless and inaudible to others ; to him, as to Sir Thomas Browne, his own uneventful life seemed, like all things else, "a miracle." His poetry has been forgotten ; Hazlitt

and Hallam do not deem it worth the mention; his tomb at Llansantfread has been desecrated. He would not have greatly cared about his fame and fortune here, after he had "gone into the world of light," after his prayer had been heard:—

"O Father of eternal life, and all  
Created glories under Thee!  
Resume Thy spirit from this world of thrall  
Into true liberty."

## THOMAS À KEMPIS

[*The Daily Chronicle*, September 28, 1901; *The Anti-Jacobin*, July 25, 1891.]

THE saints from the Doubting Apostle onward, who bear the name of Thomas, form a remarkable company. To take but three, there is the Angelic Doctor of Aquin, prince of theologians, consecrator of Aristotle to the service of Christian philosophy; there is the indomitable Thomas of Canterbury, martyr for the rights of the Church; there is Thomas More, Lord Chancellor, martyr for the supremacy of the Holy See. But there is one Thomas whose influence has extended over the world, who has sunk into the hearts of innumerable Christians outside his Church; whose chief work can be read in the tongues of the Near East and of the Far: his full name is Thomas à Kempis. . . .

After all, it is by the affections that men become powerful and become lovable: by the humanity of their spirit more than by the strength of their intellect. *Cor ad cor loquitur*: heart to heart speaketh. It may be a pitiful confession, but it is true, that they are the world's spiritual masters who tell us of things irreducible to forms of logic. Each age has its own passions and desires, wants and sorrows; unformulated truths are always at work, inarticulate feelings are always on the watch to speak. No one fully knows what new spirit has come upon men, and is thus moulding them in silence; but all dimly believe that the world is preparing for some

great change, of which those strange impulses and convictions are the heralds. And to some one man who is instinct with prophecy, to some one word thrown into the air and upon the waters, is given the power to change the world and to rule the hearts of men.

Now it is to be noticed that no writers have less influence upon the world than professed moralists and systematic teachers of ethics. Aristotle accepted, they are a barren race, historically interesting but practically unimportant. No one now is greatly concerned in the doctrines of the English moralists: even Shaftesbury and Butler, Cudworth and Adam Smith, Mandeville and Hutchinson, have lost their power of preaching. They are men who contemplate human nature not at large, but at a particular time; they are children of their century. The "spectators of all time and of all existence," as Plato calls them, have nothing of this parochial and circumscribed authority; they are men who would be at home in any country and at any time. Were Thomas à Kempis living now, can we doubt what would be his life and influence? We should hear the same counsels, given in a new way but full of the old spirit; the same gentle command to think of the value of life in the light of faith; to be at rest and peace in this noisy and uncertain world; to meditate and to pray. How is it that this Flemish monk, with his mediæval accents, has the power to draw men's hearts to him in our vast and restless cities? What is it that forces us to listen with reverence when Carlyle speaks in all his anger and his contempt?—to turn with sympathy and with affection to the pathetic voice of Arnold, mourning and consoling at once?—to do what Mr. Ruskin bids us, and work honestly and well, though in another way than his? It is only the sense that these men know what is in man: all the virtue and the vice, the gain and the loss, the pleasure and the pain. It matters not at all that we cannot always agree with them. Against Carlyle we may believe in democracy: against Arnold in Catholicism: against Mr.

Ruskin in the supremacy of the Greek genius. What does it matter? No more than historical error in the Scriptures vitiates a true faith in them. If an impression be indeed the precious thing that certain folk think it, then the impression of great men's greatness, their impress upon their century, is the best impression of all. . . . No one, it has been said, can prove the virtue of patriotism or the beauty of a sunset, but no one doubts them. Just so, the inspirers of the world are not they who impose laws, but they who win hearts: it was the secret of Newman. And for that very reason certain persons are loud in protest against his "elusive logic," and "Jesuitical subtilty," and "alluring sophistry." We can but answer *Cor ad cor loquitur*; Newman's arguments on this and that may not compel us, but himself may. And the inspirers of the world form a company of gracious or commanding men, champions, by their very names and memories, against degrading views of life. As was said by Thomas à Kempis long ago, before Luther was, or Rousseau, Hume, or Schopenhauer: "*Oportet te transire per ignem et aquam, antequam veneris in refrigerium.*"

. . . Thomas à Kempis is uncanonized yet; he has not been "raised to the altars of the Church," and no public devotion may be addressed to him. It is to be lamented; and yet it is in keeping with the humility and self-withdrawal of him whose favourite precept, for himself and others, was *Ama nesciri*, "Love to be unknown." The majority of persons if asked what they do know of him, would answer that he wrote *The Imitation of Christ*. Many of them, if told for the first time that the authorship of no work ever written has been so much contested, might be disposed to say that if à Kempis did not write it he ceased to interest them, he had no longer a claim upon their love or upon a special place in their memory. But the man and his way of life were infinitely touching and sweet, quite apart from the authorship of the *Imitation*, now quite settled for all scholars who can appreciate evidence. . . . It is a beautiful

life : a life with its spiritual troubles and bodily trials, but a life of mutual charity, of entire simplicity, of gentle order. There is nothing to offend even the least reasonable haters of asceticism and the monastic ideal ; Thomas and his brethren had common-sense and a sense of humour, two things without which piety can become distressing and even perilous. "I dare not tell," wrote Tennyson to his future wife, "how high I rate humour, which is generally most fruitful in the highest and most solemn human spirits. Dante is full of it ; Shakespeare, Cervantes, and almost all the greatest have been pregnant with this glorious power. You will find it even in the Gospel of Christ." And one day, when a lady spoke to him of Shelley's social ideals, he exclaimed : "Shelley had not common-sense !" "Well," rejoined the lady, "but had Christ common-sense ?" "Christ had more common-sense than you or I, Madam !" said Tennyson. His genuine humanity has won for à Kempis his universal hearing. A "religious," writing solely for followers of the monastic life, he yet appeals to the noisy world beyond the cloister, making felt his message of peace through renunciation. Doubtless, he has his danger for the unwary reader, who forgets that men and women in the world must read him for their own purposes, with a difference, *mutatis mutandis*. For lack of this understanding, the *Imitation* has been called "a manual of sacred selfishness" ; and even Mr. Coventry Patmore is somewhat inconsistent, when he writes, learned in mysticism and the contemplative life though he was :—

"It has struck me often lately that à Kempis, whom you are daily reading now, cannot be read with safety without remembering that he wrote his book expressly for the use of monks. There is much that is quite unfit for and untrue of people who live in the ordinary relations of life. I don't think I like the book quite so much as I did. There is a hot-house, egotistical air about much of its piety. Other persons are ordinarily the appointed means of learning the love of God, and to stifle human affections must be very often to render the love of God impossible."

And yet, what thousands of human souls, alien from the creed of à Kempis, and dissimilar to one another, have loved his gentle and stern wisdom ! The *Imitation*, said Dr. Johnson, "must be a book, as the world has opened its arms to receive it." No two human beings could well be less like each other than Rachel, the great and terrible actress, and Gordon, the "soldier saint" of Khar-toum. Yet the *Imitation* was his study under the shadow of a fierce death ; and Rachel awaited death,

"Soothing with thy Christian strain forlorn,  
A Kempis ! her departing soul outworn,  
While by her bedside Hebrew rites have place."

Or, after these diversely high and impassioned souls, listen to the dear and ridiculous Boswell speaking, no doubt sincerely, of "my favourite Thomas à Kempis." Yes ; this obscure child of the cloister, who "sought rest in all things, yet never found it, save in nooks with books," makes world-wide appeal with his doctrine of joy in self-denial ; wise as he was through study, his best wisdom was of the heart. As George Eliot greatly words it :—

"I suppose that is the reason why the small old-fashioned book, for which you need only pay sixpence at a bookstall, works miracles at this day, turning bitter water into sweetness : while expansive sermons and treatises newly issued leave all things as they were before. It was written down by a hand that waited for the heart's promptings ; it is the chronicle of a solitary, hidden anguish, struggle, trust, and triumph, not written on velvet cushions, to teach endurance to those who are treading with bleeding feet on the stones. And so it remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations, the voice of a brother who ages ago felt, and suffered, and renounced, in the cloister, with serge gown and tonsured head, with much chaunting and long fasts, and with a fashion of speech different from ours, but under the same silent far-off heavens, and with the same passionate desires, the same strivings, the same failures, the same weariness."

' *Ante obitum mortuus, post obitum vivus*, says the epitaph of St. Francis : *Cor ad cor loquitur*, was the motto of

Cardinal Newman. We apply both to Thomas à Kempis ; and the epitaph is true of him, largely because the motto is true also. An old Japanese poet, ignorant of English, asked an Englishman to read aloud some verses of Tennyson ; that done, he said that he felt the beauty of the poetry, and seemed to understand it : " we talk to each other across the world." So has à Kempis talked and touched the hearts of even those to whom Catholic doctrine is a foreign tongue, or a dead language, which they have not learned. That he should appeal to Englishmen is natural. Michelet has said, and was mistaken, that a striking testimony to a certain unsusceptibility in the spiritual character of the English is afforded by the fact that the *Imitation* has never been ascribed to English authorship. He was wrong, both in his supposed fact and in his inference therefrom. There is a marked likeness between the devotional and mystical writers of the Rhineland or of the Netherlands, and those of mediæval England : such, for example, as that wonderful anchorite, Richard Rolle of Hampole. They have, for all their soaring ecstasies, a common-sense quietude and simplicity, quite unlike the almost fierce or savage splendour of Spanish, the delicate and laughing poetry of Italian, saintly writers. It costs most Englishmen some conscious or unconscious effort to relish Saint John of the Cross or Saint Bonaventure ; Thomas à Kempis comes home to them. Coleridge says of the mystics that " they kept alive the heart within the head " ; à Kempis can do that for many who do not love, as Sir Thomas Browne loved, to " lose themselves in an *O altitudo !*" An Eastern parable tells of one, a lover of God and man, who came to the Divine Beloved's door, and knocked. " Who is there ?" asked a Voice. " It is I." The Voice made answer : " This house will not hold Me and thee." The lover went out into the desert to fast and pray. After a year of solitude and silence he knocked again. " Who is there ?" " It is Thyself !" and the door

was opened. That is the burden of the teaching à Kempis ; as M. Maeterlinck puts it : "Our lives must be spent seeking our God, for God hides ; but His artifices, once they be known, seem so simple and smiling !"

The late Mr. Stevenson, in lines equally felicitous in manner and false in matter, thus described the Trappist house, which housed him and his donkey :—

"Aloof, unhelpful, and unkind,  
The prisoners of the iron mind,  
Where nothing speaks except the bell,  
The unfraternal brothers dwell."

Well ! Thomas à Kempis, if his portrait does not show him to have worn, like Saint Francis, *facies hilaris*, certainly possessed that saint's *vultus benignus* : and Dom Scully's book about him portrays a monastic family of winning homeliness and charity ; a family of "brothers" anything but "unbrotherly." You could imagine—let us seem daring and say—Izaak Walton, spending a placid week or so, as the guest of Mount St. Agnes, and quitting it, full of grateful praise and admiration of its peaceful charm, its healthy laboriousness, its tranquil studiousness, its unostentatious and genial piety. Dr. Erasmus, true Catholic, and therefore unsparing satirist of corruptions in Catholic life, would have felt it a life congenial to him in its scholarly and quiet dignity ; even the reforming Luther, born ten years after the death of à Kempis, could have detected there no occasion for vituperative revolt. A gentle beauty, with an essential sternness as its secret, belongs to the man—very much a man—who did not, like Savonarola, fly to the cloister, with a great line of Virgil upon his lips, bidding him cast off the dust of his shoes against a degraded world, but who sought it in ardent humility, and lived in it a life which has resulted in spiritual joy to thousands. We do not claim for Thomas à Kempis that he was a great man ; yet, in Browning's words :



“The little less, and how much it is !  
The little more, and what worlds away !”

Thomas à Kempis has that “little more,” and how high it places him among the saints ! “what worlds away” from us !

## THE AGE OF DRYDEN \*

[*The Speaker*, March 21, 1896.]

THE forty years' literature discussed by Dr. Garnett contains little or nothing that is of first importance and rank, the venerable figure of Milton excepted ; and he was but among the last in time, as he was among the greatest in genius, of the Elizabethans. These forty years contain three chief and notable things : the work, and its significance, of Dryden in verse and prose ; the Restoration drama ; and a number of precious personalities, as those of Walton, Pepys, Evelyn, Bunyan, Temple, Aubrey, Wood. But Dryden at his strongest, Congreve at his artfullest, any pleasing personality at its richest or sweetest,—they cannot hope to rival the ages of Shakespeare and Bacon, or of Wordsworth and Keats ; and between the latter age and their own comes the age of exquisite finish and grace, precision and order. Take them how we may, they remind us of greater ages past and to come ; they are “wandering between two worlds.” Dryden's verse is neither Pope's nor Spenser's ; his prose neither Addison's nor Browne's ; he has the ancient qualities tempered with the new ; he is full of echoes from old times, and the shadows of coming events are over him. The wonder of him, his special praise, is his excellence under these conditions. Pope “learned versification wholly from Dryden's works” ; Gray declares, “if there is any excellence in my numbers I

\* *The Age of Dryden*. By R. Garnett, LL.D. (London : Bell & Sons, 1896.)

learned it wholly from that great poet"; says Leigh Hunt, "Dryden was the last English poet who studied versification, or, in another word, *numbers*, which are the soul of it." In his own way he has been a poet's poet, and only fellow craftsmen can fully appreciate his art. And then, as Goldsmith has it, "his excellences were not confined to poetry alone. There is in his prose writings an ease and elegance that have never yet been so well united in works of taste and criticism." All his greater work is wrought out grandly, massively, richly; most of it, as Johnson aptly distinguishes, is "great and bulky," much of it "rich and splendid." In Lander's phrase: "Though never tender nor sublime, He wrestles with and conquers Time"; he is, with his kinsman Swift, more strong than sweet, more vehement than noble: a master of language, wielding it with superb energy and animation, delighting in his strength, with nothing small about him in virtue or in vice. He is the supreme English satirist and controversialist in verse: his ironies and arguments succeed one another in his rolling, sonorous lines like huge, leaping waves. Pope's nice, neat touches, "exquisitely fine," are the steps of a dancing-master, in comparison with this mighty movement. Dryden is altogether one of the Jonsons and Johnsons, sealed of the tribes of Ben and Sam: a dictator, magnificently imperious; a man of great thews and muscles, whose very failures are powerful. This thunderer of heroic couplets and majestic Alexandrines wrote lovely lyrics; he had an ear for the harmonies of Chaucer: he could build the lofty rhyme in the elaborate ode. We have to wait for Collins and Gray before we find such another poet.

Dr. Garnett has given, then, to his book the only possible title: it is the *Age of Dryden*. It is distinctly *not* the age of Congreve, Farquhar, Vanburgh, Wycherley, and the other famous men of comedy; it would be equally true to call it the age of the Royal Society, or the age of the great preachers, or the age of the social philosophers, or the age

of the dissenting divines. For it was an age of infinite variety and ferment: if the Court and its environs were an English France, and polite London a Vanity Fair, there were still the Englands of Puritanism, of grave Anglicanism, of refined scholars and serious thinkers, of decent country gentlemen and reputable men of affairs. That Versailles-Alsatia was not all England; nor must we push too far any argument upon the morals of society drawn from its amusements. A relative of Scott, returning to him a novel by Aphra Behn, wrote in 1821: "Is it not a very odd thing that I, an old woman of eighty and upwards, sitting alone, feel myself ashamed to read a book which, sixty years ago, I have heard read aloud for the amusement of large circles, consisting of the first and most creditable society in London?" Said Dr. Johnson: "No, sir, *Prior* is a lady's book." It is a simple fact, but often ignored, that the most delicate-minded and pure-lived women of past ages have, as Thackeray puts it, joined in talk which would be too much for men none too squeamish or rigid, to-day. A great part of the dramatic licence upon the Restoration stage was conventional, a tradition from the stage of ancient Rome, an adaptation from that of contemporary Paris; intrigue leads to mirthful situations, to witty dialogue, to cross purposes, to all manner of agreeable things: and Lamb's contention, that the scenes of these comedies are laid in a fairyland, is but a whimsical exaggeration. Not, as Dr. Garnett points out, that the dramatists intended any such thing; but they busied themselves with types, with "humours," rather than with human nature. And there is another consideration, too little remembered: the astonishing dearth of literary amusement, of "light" literature. There are thousands to-day whose natural instinct for relaxation and amusement is satisfied by novels, magazines, reading of many kinds. We are constantly hearing that we have no conversation, no music, no public shows, no social arts: may not the very abundance of books now, the lack

of them in former times, have a very real connection with the difference between those times and ours? Folk have met for chamber music, for conversation, who to-day would be reading novels at home; men sit and read newspapers in village inns who would have been at dance on the green. The literature of prose fiction, the daily publication of interesting news, are still things of comparative youth; for "light" reading, as we understand it, as apart from verse, our Restoration ancestors were almost in the same case as theirs before the invention of printing. The voluminous romances, the epigrams and satires, the old chronicles and the newer essays, could not have been to them what the novelists, from Richardson and Defoe to Mr. Meredith and Mr. Stevenson, have been for their descendants. The stage was theirs; and a metropolitan stage, patronised by a brilliant and not strait-laced society, gave them gaiety of all kinds, from boisterous fun to subtle wit. Nowadays, much is written and read, without blame, which would not be tolerated upon the stage; it was not so with the stage of Charles II. To us the picture of those audiences in front of that stage suggests that the times were grossly vicious and the people grossly shameless; we forget the conditions of that age, and of ours, when we so exaggerate. If they were somewhat shameless, we are somewhat shame-faced. Grown men and women read, and harmlessly read, what they would not read aloud: in those days such a distinction was hardly understood.

In many ways these forty years were a most serious time. Locke, Newton, Cudworth, Tillotson, Algernon Sidney, Burnet, Bentley,—these are names of weight in the history of thought. But, in a sense, no one more happily illustrates the danger of false judgment than Pepys. A busy, practical, intelligent man of affairs, interested in sciences and arts, a good type of the cultivated public servant,—that, and that alone, we should have thought him, but for the *Diary*. And, did we know him merely from the lighter and more

amusing portions of the *Diary*, we should think him an engaging fribble, a gossiping dog, a disreputable fellow, to be half liked, half pitied. Both sides of him are true. This predecessor of Mr. Goschen, this ally of an earlier naval Duke of York, this President of the Royal Society, was all these things; and our knowledge of the fact should make us pause in passing judgment upon the age. Pepys was no quite ordinary man; the existence of the amazing *Diary* proves it. But what the *Diary* records is, take it bit by bit and separately, common enough; and the impression of the whole is unspeakably strange. If Pepys could be so good and so bad, so shrewd and so silly, so small-minded and so liberal-minded, yet seem to his contemporaries nothing unusual, it must have been that they were more like him than are we. How many characters do the literature and history of the times introduce to us! How many scenes and incidents which are half the truth, be it for better or for worse! For every brilliant blackguard of a courtier, whose one redeeming feature was his wit, there must have been many a citizen with Pepysian qualities, not a few with Waltonian. And of the courtiers and fine gentlemen, many must have been Evelyns in many things, though history has better preserved their escapades than their good points. It is a picturesque and medley age, passing from the old ways, the last remnants of mediævalism, to the modern days. The mighty Dryden is its great literary light, a great roaring flame, before we pass to the teacups and the wax candles, and little Mr. Pope of Twitnam, who sings of "glorious John" that he

" . . . taught to join

The varying verse, the full resounding line,

The long majestic march, and energy divine."

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

[*The Academy*, Jan. 10, 1891; *idem*, Dec. 11, 1897.]

... BOTH the Arnolds have had an influence wide and profound; and yet the influence of either has not been so greatly felt in matters immediately educational as in matters incidental to education. Neither was a theorist in pedagogy of the German type; neither has bequeathed us treatises upon methods of teaching, nor so much as wished to revolutionise the systems which they found prevailing. But both were men of ideals, who valued education less for the sake of "useful knowledge" than for its work in the formation of character, its spiritual relations with life. When critics wished to describe unfavourably a disciple of Dr. Arnold, they described an "earnest" youth, precociously alive to his "responsibilities," and prematurely absorbed in the "problems of life." When they wished to do the same by a follower of Matthew Arnold, they spoke of "supercilious culture," and "dilettante trifling," and a sense of superiority to the mass of men. The caricatures are not so extravagant as to defeat their own object: and they bear testimony to the truth, that both father and son, in their various works and ways, did aim at influencing the character, at training the disposition, at opening the mind's eye, rather than at cramming the mind. But such work as that is of necessity indirect, and has little connection with scholastic method. As educationalists, in the narrower sense of the term, the Arnolds were largely Conservative. Liberals as they were, neither had a particle of sympathy with Benthamism and Broughamism and the "common-sense" of the "practical man." They were idealists, even Utopians at times. Consider their views of Church and State. Dr. Arnold advocated an Established Church embracing all Christian sects, with their distinctive beliefs and rituals. His son dreamed of an undogmatic Anglican Church, enriched with the

"poetry," the imaginative appeal of Catholicism. And who shall say which of these fancies be the wilder, the more impossible, the more unthinkable? Both men were reformers by nature: the one enthusiastic and ardent, the other contemplative and ironical; and so the father was something of a Savonarola, the son much of an Erasmus: natures foredoomed to a certain beautiful failure, despite their plentiful success. They cared for the things of the spirit, and such men are never quite victorious.

Hawkins, the great Provost of Oriel, prophesied that Dr. Arnold, if elected to Rugby, "would change the face of education all through the public schools of England." If that be taken to mean that he would raise the standard of scholarship, as Butler of Shrewsbury raised it, or make large innovations in the quantity and quality of subjects taught, the prophecy was unfulfilled. Dr. Arnold was a good, but not a great, scholar, nor was he a fervent advocate of "the modern side." But if it means that he brought a new spirit and a quickening life into the work of the public schools, the Provost was a true prophet. Arnold, with his historical imagination and sympathies, his vital sense of citizenship and social life, his vivid apprehension of moral law revealed in past and present, made school work educative rather than, as heretofore, almost wholly instructive. His conception was that of Milton, of Coleridge, of his friend and foe, Newman: a large and, in the classical sense, a generous training, which should awaken the faculties, and fit them for a due and right discharge of life's duties and obligations, by contact with the best thought, the best beauty, the best experience of mankind. He had a thoroughly Greek sense of education as a preparation for citizenship, first and foremost: and for citizenship as he understood it in the light of Christianity. To him Christianity had no other aspect or meaning than the social; and to work for the well-being of society in the Christian spirit was the whole duty of man. For such boys

as those who came under his charge at Rugby, he believed that a classical training, liberally and lovingly given, was the best possible, in view of their future positions in the body politic, the English Christian commonwealth. So, while far from neglecting the more technical and ornamental side of classical education, he cared supremely for its awakening influence, its appeal to the imagination and the mind. He was well aware of the truth of Coleridge's saying against the utilitarian school of Brougham: "One constant blunder of these New Broomers, these Penny Magazine sages and philanthropists, in reference to our public schools, is to confine their views to what schoolmasters teach the boys, with entire oversight of all that the boys are excited to learn from each other and of themselves: with more geniality even *because* it is *not* a part of their compelled school knowledge." Arnold welcomed and encouraged all such self-education and self-culture not merely for its own sake, but for the zest and interest which it adds to the school work proper. In all this he was a pioneer, though schoolmasters before him had not entirely kept to the dry-as-dust track; and if, as is the case, there is to-day no public school in which lessons are divorced from life, and the various branches of learning are kept apart from each other in watertight compartments, the credit is Dr. Arnold's. Rugby was his kingdom, and he strove to bring all parts of it to perfection and into harmony: his letters, essays, and sermons are full of that ideal.

His great son's educational labours of a direct kind lay among the children of the poor, as inspector of elementary schools. Not the least valuable aspect of them is bound to fade away with time: we mean the singular charm, consideration, and encouraging kindliness of manner, to which all teachers and managers who met him bear ready witness. His most abiding legacy is his series of reports upon the states and systems of primary and secondary education at home and abroad, reports full of a wise lucidity and



persuasiveness. He was all for the humanising, liberalising, spiritualising side of education, a hater of pedantry and formality, a champion of the imaginative and the suggestive, as opposed to the mechanical and the lifeless or unvitalised. But the work was not congenial to him, and his sense, critical and poetical, of our national shortcomings was too personal and keen to be entirely appreciated by those to whom he appealed. Sir Joshua Fitch praises very highly, but no whit too highly, his poems and his purely literary essays: but he sees clearly that such a man was not an ideal man for his post, or rather, it may be, that he was too ideal. Matthew Arnold, with cruel truth and wit, describes Maurice as "beating the bush with profound emotion, but never starting the hare." And yet, *mutato nomine de te*: Arnold, at least, beat many bushes, but the public took no notice of the hares. That huge lower middle class, the Philistines, are absolutely unchanged by his pleadings and protests and exposures. They still delight in licensed victuallers' schools, still prefer Eliza Cook to Milton, still clamour for their deceased wives' sisters, still cling to an unlovely Puritanism. Matthew Arnold's Olympian irony and smiling melancholy have delighted those of his own social standing, but have not so much as begun to influence the masses of parents, whose children go (which is admirable) to the public primary schools, or (which is detestable) to "commercial academies." In so far as there is any popular demand for an improved and organised secondary education, its strength lies in the industrial need of improved and developed technical education, not in any adoption of Arnold's own reiterated pleas: not for the sake of a great national system of organised teaching, broadly and finely conceived, but under the pressure of commercial competition from without. Perhaps he was too unwilling to recognise how much of what he respected in the average English life rests, and must long continue to rest, upon much of what he most abhorred: upon distrust of State

interference, upon attachment to narrow forms of religion, upon a self-sufficient, dogged Puritanism. His sense of humour, happily incurable, forbade him to tolerate national qualities of so absurd an unamiableness, and his delicate laughter was not quite conciliatory; many people felt that no man could always be so exquisitely right as Mr. Arnold believed himself to be. They felt with Charlotte Brontë, at the first meeting: "Striking and prepossessing in appearance, his manner displeases from its seeming foppery. I own it caused me at first to regard him with regretful surprise; the shade of Dr. Arnold seemed to me to frown on his young representative." Not every one could discover, as Charlotte Brontë could, that there was a sincere and simple nature beneath the surface; and Arnold's chances of influencing those whom he chiefly wished to influence were hurt by misunderstandings and resentments. As poet and literary critic his fame will grow: his social writings will long be enjoyable, but are not likely to be efficacious. "How many fools does it take to make a public?" asks Chamfort. In England, Carlyle put the estimate at several millions: a terrible public to conquer by "sweetness and light"; by selections from Wordsworth, and readings in Isaiah! Unlike his father, Matthew Arnold had no kingdom of his own, no microcosm to fashion as he would: his educational labours were general and dispersive,—a visit here, a report there; now an article, and now a lecture. Yet his name is a force, his convictions carry weight, at least, in the world of experts and idealists in education: his writings remain to impress upon us the intensity of his beliefs. He is himself an example of what "culture" in its noblest sense can do: his often perfect poetry, his choice and pellucid criticism, are, indeed, the work of one who sought to acquaint himself with "the best that is thought and known."

. . . Few of modern times have been of truer make than this father and this son.

## II.

The more complete poems of Matthew Arnold are little more than one hundred in number. Of these, only five are of considerable length. So careful and discreet an achievement, during some forty years, ought to come close upon perfection: and this it does. But of Arnold's rare and happy qualities we will speak later; let us first have done with his few and venial faults. There are lines, phrases, and constructions, not perfectly polished; and there are poems, or stanzas, not perfectly poetical. That is, there are faults of expression and of conception. Arnold, as Lord Coleridge tells us, had a most imperfect ear for music. Now, while no one questions his wonderful ear for the cadence of verse, it is equally true that his sense for melody sometimes failed him. Within one short poem occur two such discordant lines as "There the pines slope, the cloud strips," and "Where the high woods strip sadly." It explains Arnold's avowed preference for the rhythm of

"Siehst sehr sterbeblässig aus,"

over the rhythm of

"Que dit le ciel à l'aube, et la flamme à la flamme?"

Again, the construction is at times forced, as in

"That furtive mien, that scowling eye,  
Of hair that red and tufted fell"—

where the second line "is only poetry because it is not prose." These technical faults are few, and they are less troublesome than the foolish affectations of much modern workmanship. The second fault, faults of conception, is more serious. Arnold rarely fails to write in a spirit of singular loftiness and beauty; he is rarely neglectful of his own precept:

"Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,  
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within."

But, at times, the thought is unadorned and the austerity far from radiant. To take an example :

“ ‘ Religious fervours ! ardour misapplied !  
Hence, hence,’ they cry, ‘ ye do but keep man blind !  
But keep him self-immersed, preoccupied,  
And lame the active mind ! ’ ”

Contrast that, in its nakedness, with the ornament and the radiance of the preceding poem : a poem full, too, of austere thought :

“ So, in its lovely moonlight, lives the soul,  
Mountains surround it, and sweet virgin air ;  
Cold plashing, past it, crystal waters roll :  
We visit it by moments, ah, too rare ! ”

At once we feel that the first lines are not interesting, not heightened, not touched with emotion ; that the second are no less beautiful than elevated.

These things are worth a few words, because the admirers of Arnold are in danger of being held his worshippers also, unless they show themselves aware of his faults. Arnold, great and admirable as he is, is no more perfect than is Gray, Milton, or Sophocles ; but he stands above the first, and the others were his most successful masters.

Arnold's poems are of two kinds : there are the narrative poems, whether dramatic or otherwise ; and the lyrical, emotional, or meditative poems. Now, it is observable that Arnold is at his best in poems neither long nor short : in poems equal in length to the average Hebrew psalm, the average Greek ode. No doubt there are exceptions : “ Sohrab and Rustum ” among the longer poems, “ Requiescat ” among the shorter, are nearly faultless. But, for the most part, it is in such poems as “ Thrysis,” “ A Summer Night,” “ Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,” that we find the true Arnold ; not in “ Balder Dead,” “ Progress,” “ Revolutions.” In other words, Arnold, to use his own

phrase, had not "the architectonics of poetry, the faculty which presides at the evolution of works like the *Agamemnon* or *Lear*." Nor was he in the literal sense a singer, such as was Heine or Catallus. Rather, his quality was meditative; he accepted, at least in practice, Wordsworth's definition of poetry, that it is "emotion remembered in tranquillity." But it may be objected that Arnold is genial, exultant, even rapturous; that he wrote nothing in the least like "The Excursion." That is true; but let us consider a little more curiously. Arnold was fond of national distinctions, qualities of race and temperament. Were one to distinguish Arnold's own qualities, the conclusion might be of this kind. From the Greek culture, he took a delight in the beauty of life and of fine imagination; from the Hebrew genius, a sense of reverence and meditation: from the French, a certain grace and lucidity of spirit; from the German, a steady seriousness of mind. By descent he was, in part, a Celt: that gave him a "natural magic" of emotion and of soul; while from his English origin he took that daring common-sense which enabled him to hold in harmony these various qualities. Trained in those chosen places of beauty and high tradition, Winchester and Oxford, with all the strength of his father's influence at Rugby, he was always attached to the English ideal: to the ideals of Milton and of Burke. A scholar, a man of the world, a government official, his affections were not narrow, not provincial; but they were not cosmopolitan, not unsettled. His heart was at home in the quiet dignity and peace of an English life, among the great books of antiquity, and the great thoughts of "all time and all existence." Hence came his limitations: not from prejudice, nor from ignorance, but from a scrupulous precision and delicacy of taste. No one loved France more than he; no one abhorred more than he "the great goddess Aselgeia." He revered the German seriousness, depth, moderation of life and thought; he

disliked and ridiculed pedantry, awkwardness, want of humour and of grace. In all his criticisms, the same balance between excess and deficiency appears : he was a true Aristotelian. And so, when it is said that Arnold was not a poet of profound philosophy, not a thinker of consistency, or not a man whom we can classify at all, the only answer is a *distinguo*. It was Arnold's work to find beauty and truth in life, to apprehend the meaning and moral worth of things, to discriminate the trivial from the grave, and to show how the serene and ardent life is better than the mean and restless. His poetry, then, is not didactic ; but meditative, in the classical sense, it is. Lord Coleridge—in those papers which make us regret that he has “to law given up what was meant for mankind,”—is of opinion that Arnold's meditative poems are not destined to live, “not from any defect of their own, but from the inherent mortality of their subjects.” Yet, surely these poems are more than records of a transitory emotion, the phase and habit of an age. Such a description would apply to Clough : his mournful, homesick, desultory poems are indeed touched with decay, because they are composed without care, in no wide spirit of contemplation ; reading them we do not think of “Sophocles by the Aegean,” nor of the *lacrimae rerum*. But Arnold's thoughts and emotions are profoundly human ; we cannot say of them that only an Oxford man, under such and such influences, at such and such a time, could have felt them in youth and expressed them in after-life. True, their immediate tone is that of one “touched by the Zeit-Geist” in the latter end of the nineteenth century ; but their fundamental character is common to all times. For Arnold is human ; and what is humanism but the belief

“that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality : no language they have spoken, no oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal ?”

Arnold, if this be so, was himself a true humanist ; and no true humanist will ever forget him. No doubt the *Christian Year* or the *Essay on Man* have lost their charm and their significance ; but we read the one as the memorial of a great phase of sentiment, and the other for its brilliant setting of a very tarnished theory. Much more will Arnold live in these grave and lovely poems, which have so little in them of mere transient feeling. Whatever be the future estimate of Arnold's poems, there is no doubt of their singular charm now. They possess the secret of great verse, its power of haunting the memory, and of profoundly satisfying it. Sad as are some of them, their melancholy is true to nature, and leaves us calm ; rejoicing as are others, they never soar out of sight, away from life. But they give a view of nature and of life as contemplated by a mind of great sympathy and insight, acquainted with the choice spirits of ancient civility, and with the living emotions of our own age. No hymn to Dolores can so touch us as the lines "To Marguerite": the feverish, antiquarian rhetoric of the one may thrill the nerves and leave us tired ; the pure beauty and the austere passion of the other appeals to every faculty in us, and leaves a sense of the beauty of human sorrow. Paradoxical as it may sound, there is something very hieratic about Arnold : his apprehension of the beauty of holiness, his love for what is clear and lofty in the pleasures of thought, his constant service of meditation.

"Ah, les Voix, mourez donc, mourantes que vous êtes :  
Sentences, mots en vain, métaphores mal faites,  
Toute la rhétorique en fuite des péchés,  
Ah, les Voix, mourez donc, mourantes que vous êtes !"

Arnold would not have liked M. Verlaine's poetry ; but those lines express much of Arnold's mind. The false worship of words, the conventional acceptance of phrases, all the spurious wisdom in the world, he fought against,

and conquered much of it ; and there is no one left to take his place in the struggle against vulgarity and imposture : no voice like his to sing as he sang of calm and peace among the turbulent sounds of modern life.

## CARDINAL NEWMAN

MR. HUTTON'S LIFE, AND THE LETTERS TO 1845 \*

[*The Academy*, Nov. 8, 1890; *The Anti-Jacobin*, Jan. 31, 1891.]

### I

. . . EVERY Life of Newman must, of necessity, be based upon the *Apologia* ; and Mr. Hutton has almost achieved the impossible ; he has almost succeeded in abridging that masterpiece. There is one biography in our language, and Boswell wrote it ; the one autobiography Newman has written. From this wonderful and pathetic record Mr. Hutton has compiled a fair and judicious narrative ; fair, because he suppresses nothing ; judicious, because we can discern the truth, the prevailing motive, in different passages and circumstances.

But the most original and important part of this book is contained in two chapters ; those upon " Newman's Alleged Scepticism " and upon the " Theory of Development." It is here that Mr. Hutton does good service to history and to common-sense. He makes it clear that Newman was not an infidel at heart, given over to superstition voluntarily ; and that Newman's conception of theology was not eclectic, personal, and forced, but scientific, historical, and authoritative. The charge of suppressed scepticism has been brought against Newman by writers and thinkers of very

\* Cardinal Newman (in the English Leaders of Religion Series). By R. H. Hutton. London. (Methuen.) 1890. 2. *Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman, during his Life in the English Church* : with a brief autobiography. Edited, at Cardinal Newman's request, by Anne Mozley. 2. (Longmans.) 1890.



various minds: by Prof. Huxley, for example, and by Mr. Swinburne. The latter, as a philosophical logician, we may safely ignore; but the weighty assertions of Prof. Huxley require an answer, and Mr. Hutton has furnished it, to the satisfaction of all fair and open minds. To all such charges, inexplicable to those acquainted with Newman's work, it is enough reply to quote the *Apologia* :—

“Many persons are very sensitive of the difficulties of Religion; I am sensitive of them as any one; but I have never been able to see a connexion between apprehending those difficulties, however keenly, and multiplying them to any extent, and on the other hand doubting the doctrines to which they are attached. Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt, as I understand the subject: difficulty and doubt are incommensurate.”

Or, again, in *The Grammar of Assent*, the most careful distinctions are drawn between true and false belief. For example :—

“This practice of assenting simply on authority, with the pretence and without the reality of assent, is what is meant by formalism. To say ‘I do not understand a proposition, but I accept it on authority’ is not formalism; it is not a direct assent to the proposition, still it *is* an assent to the authority which enunciates it.”

Or, to take a decisive passage :—

“Of the two, I would rather have to maintain that we ought to begin with believing everything that is offered to our acceptance, than that it is our duty to doubt of everything. This, indeed, seems the true way of learning. In that case, we soon discover and discard what is contradictory; and error having always some portion of truth in it, and the truth having a reality which error has not, we may expect that when there is an honest purpose and fair talents, we shall somehow make our way forward, the error falling off from the mind and the truth developing and occupying it.”

The chapter upon the “Theory of Development,” while far from accepting Newman's argument in its entirety, yet seizes upon its magnificent characteristics, its historical breadth, its intuition into spiritual tendencies and logical issues. The book has met with many and able antagonists,

such as Mozley, Hare, and the learned Archer Butler ; but we feel, in reading them, that they are struggling against the stream, grasping at straws, trying to arrest the progress of history and of growth. Newman's "spontaneous perception of truth," to use his own words, led him infallibly right ; not logic, in its formal sense, not reasoning and learning, of themselves, but a subtle, spiritual genius was his guide. It is curious, painful, and profitable to read, beside the Cardinal's *Apologia*, his brother's *Phases of Faith*. In that, too, we recognise the instinctive view, the swift following of thought after thought, the faithful obedience to changed convictions. In truth, there was no resting-place for either, and there is none for any man of consistency between the extremes ; and Newman displays, what Anglicans and Protestants do not, the thoroughness and the completeness of belief. That is to say, he refused to listen to the compromises which indolence or self-will suggests. If faith in God imply Christianity, if Christianity imply Catholicism, if Catholicism imply endless difficulties to the human mind, Newman would have the believer in God, in virtue of his faith and of its issues, accept the difficulties without hesitation, as parts of a necessary mystery. In Mr. Birrell's *Obiter Dicta*, those sayings by the way which we may afford to disregard, occurs this pathetic exclamation :—

"Oh, Spirit of Truth, where wert thou, when the remorseless deep of superstition closed over the head of John Henry Newman, who surely deserved to be thy best-loved son ?"

Had Newman ever wasted his time upon such writings, we can imagine what would have been his gentle contempt and pity for this foolish rhetoric. It was just such an attitude towards faith and towards Catholicism which Newman constantly deplored, exposed, dissected, and ridiculed :—

"I really do think it is the world's judgment that one principal part of a confessor's work is the putting down such misgivings in his penitents. It fancies that the reason is ever rebelling, like the flesh ;

that doubt, like concupiscence, is elicited by every sight and sound, and that temptation insinuates itself in every page of letterpress, and through the very voice of a Protestant polemic. When it sees a Catholic priest, it looks hard at him, to make out how much there is of folly in his composition, and how much of hypocrisy. But, my dear brethren, if these are your thoughts, you are simply in error. Trust me, rather than the world, when I tell you that it is no difficult thing for a Catholic to believe ; and that unless he grievously mis-manages himself, the difficult thing for him is to doubt."

To criticise Mr. Hutton's book in detail would be to express little else than satisfaction with his work ; the spirit of intellectual sympathy, of cordial reverence and affection, which animates it, is unfailing. But Mr. Hutton is, naturally, no servile admirer of Newman's thoughts and conclusions, however great be his admiration of Newman's character and life. And there is one point upon which he is constantly insisting ; upon Newman's undue exaltation of, or care for, dogma. Such a passage as this is a good example of many similar passages :—

"Dogma is essential in order to display and safeguard the revelation ; but dogma is not itself the revelation. And it is conceivable that in drawing out and safeguarding the revelation, the Church may not unfrequently have laid even too much stress on right conceptions, and too little on right attitudes of will and emotions."

There is a difference between the quiet tone of Mr. Hutton and the excited fervour of Prof. Francis Newman ; but we are reminded of the latter's outburst :

"Oh Dogma ! Dogma ! how dost thou trample under foot love, truth, conscience, justice ! Was ever a Moloch worse than thou ?"

Surely the answer to Mr. Hutton is that, though dogma be not revelation, yet revelation is dogma : "right attitudes of will and emotion" are essential, but "right" in relation to what ? To those certainties, moral and spiritual, which exist alike in conscience and in revelation, but which conscience cannot formulate without revelation ; while revelation is revelation of divine facts, which are ordered and systematised by the science of theology. Revelation

without dogma is a blank; dogmas are the contents of revelation made clear, according to the wants of time and place, by an authority divinely commissioned. But of the whole subject there is no finer exposition than in Newman's *Idea of an University*, and the lectures on theology contained there.

There are two points inevitably raised by any book or essay about Newman: his position and influence as an Anglican, and his value in literature. Upon the first point it is not necessary to say much: *Securus iudicat orbis terrarum*. But there has grown up a tendency in certain quarters to renounce Newman as an exponent of Anglicanism: to assert that he was not the originator, in any sense, of the Oxford Movement. It was Keble, or Pusey, or Rose, or Alexander Knox, or Hurrell Froude; it was any one rather than Newman. Now it is true that Wordsworth was not the first poet who "returned to Nature" after the days and the school of Pope; it is true that Scott was not the first to find inspiration in mediæval romance; it is true that Coleridge was not the first to introduce German metaphysics. But it is pedantic to insist upon these absurd and trifling truths; and, just so, it is foolish to ascribe to any other man the place of teacher and inspirer held by Newman. Burgon has striven to do this; but the general voice of tradition is too strong for him. Pattison, Mr. Mozley, Mr. Wilfrid Ward, Shairp, Clough, Arnold and a thousand more, testify to the reality of Newman's supremacy. He alone was the genius of Oxford for the first half of this century. Contrast with him, to name only the dead, Faber and Ward, among Catholics; Keble and Pusey, among Anglicans. Wordsworth recognised in Faber the gifts of a great poet. Mill praised in Ward a subtle and powerful logic. The great merits of Keble and Pusey are beyond dispute. But all four are absolutely insignificant beside Newman: beside the man whose mind was "a miracle of intellectual delicacy," and

his presence that of "a spiritual apparition." For Newman, all his life through, obeyed the command of Sir Thomas Browne :

"Let intellectual tubes give thee a glance of things which visive organs reach not. Have a glimpse of incomprehensibles, and thoughts of things which thoughts but tenderly touch. Lodge immaterials in thy head ; ascend unto invisibles ; fill thy spirit with spirituals, with the mysteries of faith, the magnalities of religion, and thy life with the honour of God."

To be "a man of one book" is a proverb. Certainly, to the present writer, the thirty-six volumes of Newman, from the most splendid and familiar passages down to their slightest and most occasional note, are better known than anything else in any literature and language. And so it is difficult to criticise those who do not acknowledge in Newman a master in literature ; there is no writer whose mastery seems more clear and indisputable. Mr. Austin has lately said of him :

"A style which is superb in its vigour, ease, and suppleness, practically ceases to be a force in literature, and is to be found chiefly in theological remains, than which nothing is more forbidding. It makes me weep."

To the last words we can but say *tu quoque*. But, apart from the bigotry or the tastelessness of the passage, it is not even true that Newman's work is chiefly theological ; that is, in the true sense of theology. There are twelve volumes of perfect oratory, not in the main theological, but ethical and psychological ; there are, at most, but seven volumes of professed technical theology. The rest contain "infinite riches" : satire, humour, romance, criticism, poetry, history ; he has composed Ciceronian dialogues ; he has parodied prize poems ; he has written African witch-chants ; he has satirised newspaper articles and public speeches ; he has imitated the Greek tragic chorus ; he has enriched criticism with faultless judgments. To him I turn for the

truest estimates of Byron or of Cicero ; for the best theory of portrait-painting ; for the subtlest description of musical emotion. Newman was, emphatically, a man of social habit, and his books are more full than Thackeray's of worldly knowledge. And all this wealth of matter and thought is conveyed in a style of singular charm, of most strange and haunting beauty. . . . No man ever combined so much beauty of character with so much beauty of expression. In this harmony of qualities he, like his patron Saint Philip Neri, was an Athenian, but touched with a deeper sentiment : at once with more patience, and more passion.

## II

"It has been so long said," wrote Dr. Johnson, "as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their letters, and that he who writes to his friend lays his heart open before him. But the truth is that such were the simple friendships of the 'Golden Age,' and now the friendships only of children. Very few can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which, by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a distinct and continued view ; and certainly what we hide from ourselves we do not show to our friends. There is, indeed, no transaction which offers stronger temptation to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse."

These sage reflections were suggested by Pope's letters ; applicable as they are to Pope, they do not touch Newman. "The true life of a man is in his letters," was his fixed opinion, and his own letters confirm it. Now, in the case of a man whose perfect sincerity is not questioned, the records of his life from childhood up to middle age should enable us to draw a harmonious picture of his mind and character. His formal works tell us what he thought and held ; his informal and casual utterance, his private

and personal history, should tell us what he was. Concisely speaking, Newman had two chief characteristics; one of them a mental habit, and the other a spiritual. He possessed, in an extraordinary degree, psychological insight and the impulse to use it; and he possessed in no less powerful a degree certain moral principles, based upon innate conviction. It is in the relations of the psychological phenomena to the moral certainties, and in his power of adjusting them, that the strength of Newman lay. On the one hand, he starts from the moral law of conscience, implying, to him, the existence of a personal God. On the other hand, he has a profound or piercing sense of mental states, emotions, and tendencies, which must be brought into harmony with the supreme conscience. So far, Newman differs only in degree from most men who are moral-minded; his distinction, that in him which is the note of his greatness and the secret of his influence, lay in his application of his powers and principles. We recognise in Pusey, or in Döllinger, a deep religious sentiment, guiding a great historical erudition; in Keble or in Faber a deep poetical sentiment, blending with a fervent religious sense. But Newman had more than this: he had an absolute genius of the rarest kind. It appeals in one especial way: in his complete acceptance of the facts of life and of history, no less than of the facts of the individual mind and soul, as things to be examined by the critical conscience. Nothing is isolated: nothing stands outside the region of conscience; all things are subject to the supremacy of its moral law. In a man of limited perception, very few elements compose the sum of things; but Newman, physically and mentally, was a man of the finest and most delicate perception, sensitive and emotional. There are pages in these volumes which for exquisite refinement of analysis might have been written by one or two great living Frenchmen; minute accounts of mental and physical states, displaying a very genius for psychological work. There are curious passages

of self-description, telling us how conscious he was of his own irony, or shyness, or vehemence, and of their effects upon other people. There are passages of nature-description, full of magical touches, and illustrating his susceptibility to the influence of season and place. An admirable judge of wine ; an excellent violinist ; a man of a rare feeling for perfection in beauty, material or spiritual. This is an age of greater sensibility, more governed by the emotions and the desires, than any other ; literature abounds with sick and morbid beauty ; everywhere men are drifting from one philosophy of doubt to another, aware of their own futility, and tired of all thought and action. They feel, to quote Newman, "those indefinite, vague, and withal subtle feelings which quite pierce the soul and make it sick." But they do not add with him : "What a veil and curtain this world of sense is ! beautiful, but still a veil." To such an age comes Newman, and sets forth a solution and a cure. Not, as some have said, an anodyne or opiate ; because Newman's method has a logical consistency, though it may not use the logic of the sciences. No doubt, the same thing may be put in two ways : we can say, Christianity and Catholicism do but offer us what we would like to have ; or, they are true because they explain and complement the phenomena of human nature. And, it would seem, the agreement of a religious faith with the wants and capacities of mankind is more likely, *a priori*, to be true than false. Strong in that conviction, Newman laid hold upon all the varieties of human nature, all the developments of history, and all the incidents of daily life, as so much evidence for the truth of Christianity ; and all this, in direct obedience to the logic of conscience and of spiritual perception, which furnished him with a test and touchstone for them all. Like Goethe, he was "resolute to live" in harmony. So that he has a claim upon the consideration of the age in virtue of his urbanity, his culture, his catholic intelligence, such as other religious leaders have not.



The letters show Newman in the heat and toil of battle: busy, hard at work, an active politician of the English Church. He is in the thick of every fight; engaged in endless plans, in endless work, always before the public. But under no circumstances does he lose his reverent manner, nor sacrifice the purity of his inner life. So simple, yet so subtle, he holds a unique place in our century: an example of entire obedience to the moral law, and to its intellectual consequences, at the cost of any suffering. Had he been a recluse, unsocial in temperament, narrow in comprehension, he would have been little to admire; but here was a man who delighted in the human side of life, in all that is attractive to men. Carlyle, in all his greatness, was a bigot, to whom certain sides of life were incomprehensible: his influence must always be limited. Newman, accepting and appreciating all sides of life, shows what is the true harmony of all: the origin, the tendency, the excellence, or the danger, of every thought and feeling. As Saint Augustine in the *Civitas Dei*, or Bishop Butler in the *Analogy*, so Newman takes up the scattered and wayward influences of his day, and sifts them through his conscience. Like them, he may not be superseded: like them, he will endure. In his own phrase: "Every thought I think is thought, and every word I write is writing."

# The Critical and Poetical Work of LIONEL JOHNSON

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"Lionel Johnson"—says a writer in the *Academy* at the time of his death—was a scholar by instinct, a poet by longing, and a critic by profession. His poetry was subjective, the reflection of a temperament that was entirely introspective. Stately, austere, mystical by turns, three themes moved him to enthusiasm: his old school, Winchester, Oxford, and Ireland. Mysticism, whether Catholic or Pagan, always touched his muse to a deeper note. A re-reading of his two volumes of poems, one published in 1895, when he was twenty-eight, the other in 1897, vividly recalls the cloistral mediævalism and mysticism of his mind." He further speaks of Johnson's "fine and enkindling critical work, the soaring idealism, the pertinent allusiveness, and the scholarly use of the best thought of the world that this rich mind employed to colour and illumine his grave theses."

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